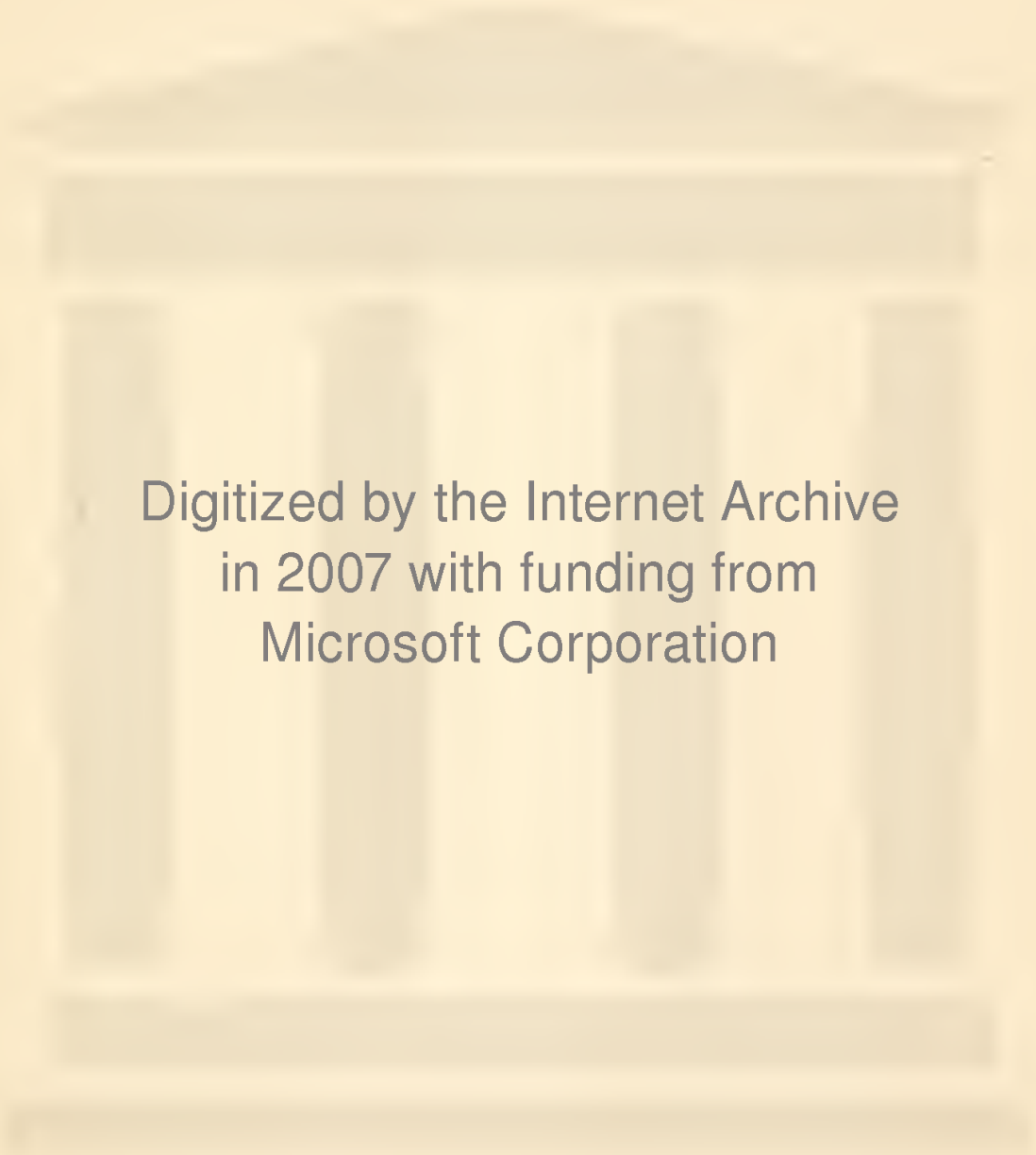
Edgeworth

Simple Susan



TOLD TO THE CHILDREN SERIES

EDITED BY LOUEY CHISHOLM

SIMPLE SUSAN

No, it is not Susan's Guinea Hen said Miss Barbara colouring furiously.

Maria Edgeworth

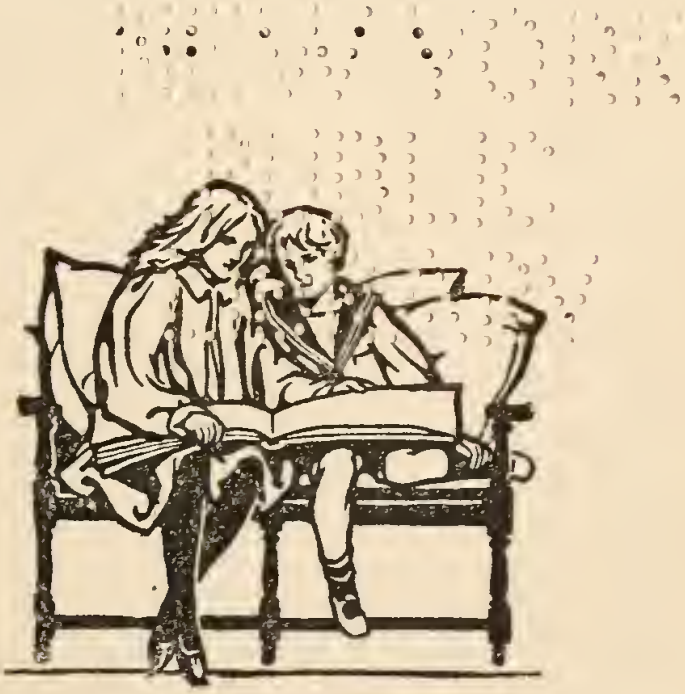
SIMPLE SUSAN

TOLD TO THE CHILDREN BY

LOUEY CHISHOLM

WITH PICTURES BY

OLIVE ALLEN



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TO DIANA

ABOUT THIS BOOK

When I was a little girl there stood on the third bottom shelf of a tall book-case in our home a book with a dingy cover and an uninteresting name. It was called 'The Parent's Assistant.' One wet day I began to wonder what it was that the dingy book assisted my parents to do. To find out I took it from its place and opened it. Picture my surprise when I saw printed on the title-page 'The Parent's Assistant, or Stories for Children.' I could not read the stories then, because of the difficult words, but later I devoured them all, and the one I liked best was 'Simple Susan.'

For three reasons I tell you that tale again in this little book. Firstly, because 'The Parent's Assistant' is not likely to attract you any more than it did me, and I cannot bear to think that Susan might never cross your

path. Secondly, because if you did meet her in 'The Parent's Assistant,' you would stumble over many words and sentences that you could neither read yourself nor understand if they were read to you. And thirdly, because I know that Miss Olive Allen, who loves Susan, can paint for you exactly the pictures you will like.

If you, too, should love 'Simple Susan' and should wish other stories of the same kind told and pictured for you, you must write to let me know, and I shall see what I can find for you in my dingy copy of 'The Parent's Assistant.'

LOUEY CHISHOLM.

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CHAPTER I

QUEEN OF THE MAY

Simple Susan lived one hundred years ago.

Mr. Price was Susan's father. He rented a small farm and was always hard at work. No more honest man could be found far or near, and he loved his little daughter from the bottom of his big heart.

Mrs. Price was Susan's mother. She was a good woman who was always busy cooking, or cleaning or sewing. The bread and cakes made by her were better than those made by any one else in the village. When she was not doing household work, she earned money by taking in plain needle-work. All who knew Mrs. Price liked her and were sorry she was so far from strong. That no girl had a better mother than Susan, every one agreed.

John and William were Susan's little

brothers. They were quite sure that no other boys in all the world had such a good sister as theirs.

Our story begins on the evening before the first of May.

Now one hundred years ago, Mayday was looked forward to with glee by all English children living in the country. Early that morning the lads and lasses of the village, gaily decked with flowers, would go merrily singing from house to house. In their midst would walk the Queen of the May, or sometimes, seated in a chair twined round with blossom, she would be carried from door to door by her little companions. With a wreath of their gayest flowers they would crown her their Queen, and for her would be woven the fairest garlands. After the May carols were sung, cake, coppers or small silver coins would be given to the boys and girls.

To choose their Queen and to arrange their flowers the children would meet on the last day of April.

This they did in the village where Susan lived, and their meeting-place was in a corner

of a field close by a large pink hawthorn. A shady lane ran past one side of the bush. On another side a sweet-briar hedge separated it from the garden belonging to an attorney.

This attorney was a very cross man, so cross that the village people were always in fear of him. Although he had hedged and fenced his garden, it sometimes happened that there would stray into it a pig, or a dog, or a goat or a goose belonging to a poor neighbour. Then the attorney would go to the owner of the stray animal and in a harsh voice demand money to pay for the damage it had done.

Nor did this cruel man let people walk along the paths through his meadows although they did no harm. He blocked up the stiles with stones and prickly shrubs, so that not even a gosling could squeeze under them nor a giant climb over. Even the village children were afraid to fly their kites near his fields, lest they should get entangled in his trees or fall on his ground.

Mr. Case was the name of this attorney, and he had one son and a daughter called Barbara.

For long the father paid no attention to the

education of his children, for all his time and thought were given to money-making. Meanwhile Barbara and her brother ran wild with the village children. But suddenly Mr. Case decided to send his son to a tutor to learn Latin, and to employ a maid to wait upon Barbara. At the same time he gave strict orders that his children should no longer play with their old companions.

The village children were not at all sorry when they heard this. Barbara had not been a favourite among them, for she had always wanted to rule them and to secure for herself the chief part in their games.

When Barbara saw that she was not missed by her old friends she was vexed, and she became angry when she found that they paid no attention to the grand air with which she now spoke nor to the fine frocks which she wore.

To one girl Barbara had a special dislike. This was none other than Susan Price, the sweetest-tempered and busiest lass in the village, and the pride and delight of all who knew her. The farm rented by Susan's father

was near the house in which Mr. Case lived, and Barbara from her window used to watch Susan at work.

Sometimes the little girl was raking the garden plots in her neat garden, sometimes she was weeding the paths; sometimes she was kneeling at her beehive with fresh flowers for her bees, and sometimes she was in the hen-yard scattering corn among the eager little chickens. In the evening Barbara often saw her sitting in the summer-house over which sweet honeysuckle crept, and there, with a clean, three-legged deal table before her upon which to lay her work, Susan would sew busily. Her seams were even and neat, for Mrs. Price had taught her daughter that what is worth doing is worth doing well.

Both Susan and her mother were great favourites in the village. It was at Mrs. Price's door that the children began their Mayday rounds, and it was Susan who was usually Queen of the May.

It was now time for the village children to choose their queen. The setting sun was shining full upon the pink blossoms of the

hawthorn when the merry group met to make their plans for the morrow.

Barbara Case, sulkily walking alone in her father's garden, heard the happy voices and, crouching behind the hedge that divided her from the other children, she listened to their plans.

'Where is Susan?' were the first words she overheard.

'Yes, where is Susan?' repeated a boy called Philip, stopping short in a tune he was playing on his pipe: 'I want her to sing me this air, I can't remember how it goes.'

'And I wish Susan would come, I'm sure,' cried Mary, a little girl whose lap was full of primroses. 'She will give me some thread to tie up my nosegays, and she will show me where the fresh violets grow, and she has promised to give me a great bunch of her cowslips to wear to-morrow. I wish she would come.'

'Nothing can be done without Susan!' cried another child. 'She always shows us where the nicest flowers are to be found in the lanes and meadows.'

'Susan must help to weave the garlands,' said another.

'Susan must be Queen of the May!' shouted several together.

'Why does she not come?' grumbled Philip.

Rose, who was Susan's special friend, now came forward to remind them that when Susan was late it was always because she was needed at home.

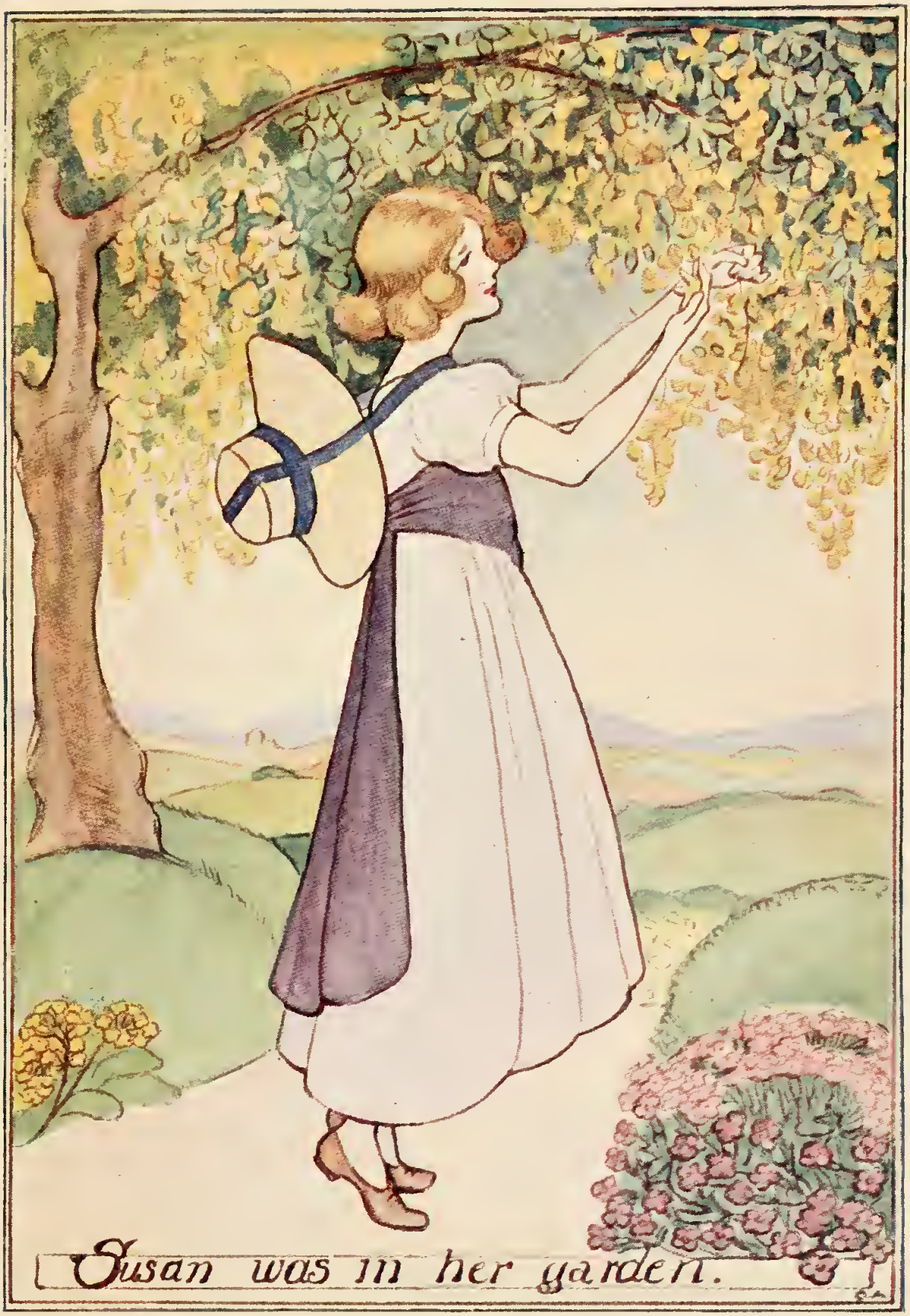
'Go, Rose, and tell her to make haste,' cried the impatient Philip. 'Attorney Case is dining at the Abbey to-day, and if he comes home and finds us here, perhaps he will drive us away. He says this bit of ground belongs to his garden, but that is not true, for Farmer Price says we have all as much right to it as he has. He wants to rob us of our playground. I wish he and Bab, or Miss Barbara, as I suppose we must now call her, were a hundred miles away, I do. Just yesterday she knocked down my ninepins on purpose as she passed with her gown trailing in the dust.'

'Yes,' cried Mary, 'her gown is always trailing. She does not hold it up nicely like Susan, and in spite of all her fine clothes she never

looks half so neat. Mamma says she hopes I shall grow like Susan, and so do I. I should not like to be vain like Barbara were I ever so rich.'

'Rich or poor,' said Philip, 'it does not become a girl to be vain, much less bold, as Barbara was the other day. She stood at her father's door, and stared at a strange gentleman who stopped near by, to let his horse drink. I know what he thought of Bab, by his looks, and of Susan too; for Susan was in her garden, bending down a branch of the laburnum tree, looking at its yellow flowers which had just come out, and when the gentleman asked her how many miles it was to the next village, she answered him modestly, not bashfully as if she had never seen any one before, but just right. Then she pulled on her straw hat that had fallen back while she was looking up at the laburnum, and went her way home, and the gentleman said to me after she was gone, "Pray, who is that neat, modest girl?" But I wish,' cried Philip, interrupting himself, 'I wish Susan would come!'

Barbara, still crouching on the other side of the hedge, heard everything that was said.



Susan was in her garden.

Susan was all this time, as her friend Rose had guessed, busy at home. She had been kept by her father's returning later than usual. His supper was ready for him nearly an hour before he came home, and Susan swept the hearth twice, and twice put on wood to make a cheerful blaze for him. At last, when he did come in, he took no notice of the blaze or of Susan; and when his wife asked him how he was, he made no answer, but stood with his back to the fire, looking very gloomy.

Susan put his supper upon the table, and set his own chair for him, but he pushed away the chair and turned from the table, saying, 'I shall eat nothing, child. Why have you such a fire to roast me at this time of year?'

'You said yesterday, father, I thought, that you liked a little cheerful wood fire in the evening, and there was a great shower of hail. Your coat is quite wet. We must dry it.'

'Take it, then, child,' he said, pulling it off, 'I shall soon have no coat to dry. Take my hat, too,' he went on, throwing it upon the ground.

Susan hung up his hat, put his coat over the

back of a chair to dry, and then stood looking at her mother, who was not well. She had tired herself with baking, and now, alarmed by her husband's strange conduct, she sat down pale and trembling. The father threw himself into a chair, folded his arms, and gazed into the fire.

Susan was the first who ventured to break the silence. Fondling her father, she tried to coax him to eat the supper prepared for him. This, however, she could not persuade him to do, but he said, with a faint smile, that he thought he could eat one of her guinea-hen's eggs.

Susan thanked him, and showed her eagerness to please her dear father by running as fast as she could to her neat chicken-yard. Alas! the guinea-fowl was not there. It had strayed into the garden of Mr. Case. She could see it through the paling.

Going to the garden gate, Susan timidly opened it, and seeing Miss Barbara walk slowly by, she asked if she might come in and take her guinea-fowl.

Barbara, who at that moment was thinking

of all she had heard the village children say, started when she heard Susan's voice.

'Shut the gate,' she said crossly, 'you have no business in our garden. As for the hen, I shall keep it; it is always flying in here and plaguing us, and my father told me I might catch it and keep it the next time it got in, and it is in now.' Then Barbara called to her maid Betty and bid her catch the mischievous bird.

'Oh, my guinea-hen! my pretty guinea-hen!' cried Susan, as mistress and maid hunted the frightened, screaming creature from corner to corner.

'Now we have it!' said Betty, holding it fast by the legs.

'Then pay damages, Queen Susan, or you may say good-bye to your pretty guinea-hen, said Barbara in a rude tone.

'It has done no damage,' said Susan; 'but tell me what I must pay.'

'A shilling,' said Barbara.

'Oh, if only sixpence would do!' said Susan; 'I have but sixpence of my own in the world, and here it is.'

'It won't do,' said Barbara, turning her back.

'Nay, but hear me,' cried Susan; 'let me at least come in to look for its eggs. I only want one for my father's supper. You shall have all the rest.'

'What is your father or his supper to us; is he so particular that he can eat none but guinea-hen's eggs?' said Barbara. 'If you want your hen and your eggs, pay for them, and you shall have them.'

'I have only sixpence and you say that won't do,' said Susan with a sigh, as she looked at her favourite which was in the maid's cruel hands, struggling and screaming in vain.

Susan went away feeling very sad. At the door of her father's cottage she saw her friend Rose, who had just come to summon her to the hawthorn bush.

'They are all at the hawthorn, and I have come for you. We can do nothing without you, dear Susan,' cried Rose, running to meet her the moment she saw her. 'You are chosen Queen of the May—come, make haste. But what is the matter? Why do you look so sad?'

'Ah!' said Susan, 'don't wait for me; I can't come to you, but,' she added, pointing to the tuft of cowslips in the garden, 'gather those for little Mary; I promised them to her, and tell her the violets are under a hedge just beside the stile, on the right as we go to church. Good-bye! never mind me; I can't come—I can't stay, for my father wants me.'

'But don't turn away your face; I won't keep you a moment; only tell me what is the matter,' said her friend, following her into the cottage.

'Oh, nothing, not much,' said Susan; 'if I had not wanted the egg in a great hurry for father, it would not have vexed me—to be sure I should have clipped my guinea-hen's wings, and then she could not have flown over the hedge; but let us think no more about it now, she added, trying to hide a tear.

When Rose, however, learned that her friend's guinea-hen was kept a prisoner by Barbara, she was hot with indignation, and at once ran back to tell the story to her companions.

CHAPTER II

BAD NEWS

As Susan entered the cottage parlour, Farmer Price drew his chair close to his wife. 'You see there is something amiss with me,' he said; 'I must tell you what it is.' Her father lowered his voice, and Susan, who was not sure that he wished her to hear what he was going to say, moved from behind his chair.

'Susan, don't go; sit down here, sweet Susan,' he said, making room for her beside him. 'I am afraid I was cross when I came in to-night, but I had something to vex me, as you shall hear.'

Then the farmer told how, a fortnight before, lots had been drawn in the nearest town, to see which men there and in the surrounding villages should leave home to be trained as soldiers. For a hundred years ago it was in

this way that men were found to defend their country. Only if they were under eighteen or above forty years of age could they escape drawing lots.

'Now, as I would be forty in ten days,' said the farmer, 'I was told just to call myself forty then and there; but the truth is the truth, and should be spoken at all times, come what may. And when the lots were drawn, it fell to me among others to leave home to be trained to fight. I was thinking how unhappy we should be to part, when I heard that if I paid nine guineas to another man, he would take my place, and I could remain at home with you. I had not the money, for you know the bad luck we had with the sheep this year, and how they died one after the other. But I went to Mr. Case and asked him to lend me the money. He said he would if I handed over to him my lease, for he said, "If you do not repay me the guineas I shall keep the lease until you do."'

'That was a fortnight ago, and to-night Attorney Case tells me he has discovered that, owing to some mistake in the lease, we

may be turned out of the farm at any time. But I've not come to the worst part yet.'

Here Farmer Price stopped short, and his wife and Susan gazed anxiously into his face.

'The truth must be told,' he said with a deep sigh. 'I must now leave you in three days.'

'Must you?' said his wife faintly. 'Susan dear, open the window.' Susan ran to do as she was bid, and then returned to her mother's side. The fresh air soon revived the poor woman, and she begged her husband to go on with his story, and to hide nothing from her.

Farmer Price had no wish to hide anything from those he loved so well. He believed that the truth should be spoken at all times, but never had he found it so difficult as at this moment.

What had happened was this. Attorney Case had met Farmer Price that evening. The farmer was coming home, whistling, from a new-ploughed field. The Attorney was on horseback, and had just dined at the Abbey with Sir Arthur Somers. The Abbey had until lately belonged to Sir Arthur's elder brother,

but now that he was dead, Sir Arthur owned the estate.

Attorney Case had looked after the property for the elder brother, and was anxious to be employed by Sir Arthur. There were many farms on the estate, and it had been part of the Attorney's work to look after the repairs and to collect the rents. Unfortunately, he had an unpleasant way of dealing with the farmers, ordering them as he had no right to do, and being harsh with those who, through misfortune, had not enough money to pay their rent in full.

As the Attorney met Farmer Price he stopped him, saying, 'A word with you, Farmer Price, if you please. Walk alongside my horse, and listen. You know the field with the pink hawthorn where the village children play? I am going to add it to my garden. I hear you say it does not belong to me. What do you mean by that?'

'I mean what I say,' said Price; 'the field is not yours.' So angry was the Attorney on hearing this, that he at once made up his mind to hurt the farmer as much as he could.

'My good man,' he said, 'you will remember that a fortnight ago I lent you nine guineas. To-morrow morning you must return them to me.'

'Those guineas,' replied the farmer, 'I paid, as you know, to the man who said he would go instead of me to be trained as a soldier. But he has not yet gone, and I can still get the guineas back from him and go myself to be trained.'

The Attorney was not prepared for this answer. 'I do not want to drive you to that,' he said, pretending to be kind. 'Now about the field,—you do not want to add it to the farm, do you?'

'Certainly not, for it is not mine.'

'Then why object to my having it?'

'Because it is not yours. The children who play there have the right. It belongs to the village. Truth is truth.'

'And a debt is a debt,' shouted the angry Attorney, 'and must be paid. Bring me my nine guineas!'

With a heavy heart Farmer Price walked on. He passed the door of his cottage and

went in search of the man to whom he had paid the money. The man was quite willing to return it, as there were many others, he said, who would be willing to give him the same sum or more for his services.

The moment Price got the money he took it straight to Mr. Case, laid it on his desk and was going away, when the Attorney called out, 'Not so fast, you have forgotten your lease.'

'Ah yes! my lease, I had forgotten it. Let me have it.'

'Pardon me,' said the Attorney with a cruel smile, 'but I cannot let you have it. On reading it over I find, that owing to a mistake, you may be turned out of the farm at any time. I must keep it to show to Sir Arthur. I have no doubt he will want me to look after things for him as I did for his brother. Now perhaps you wish you had quietly let me add the field to my garden.'

Farmer Price said nothing, but dragged himself home a sad man.

CHAPTER III

SUSAN'S GUINEA-FOWL

When Susan had heard her father's story, she quite forgot the loss of her guinea-hen, and thought only of her poor mother who, try as she might, could not bear the bad news.

In the middle of the night Susan was roused, as Mrs. Price had become ill, and it was not until early morning that the poor woman fell asleep, her daughter's hand locked fast in hers. Susan remained sitting by the bedside, breathing quietly. Then seeing the candle burn low, she gently withdrew her hand, and on tiptoe went to put out the light, lest the unpleasant smell should wake her mother.

All was silent. The grey light of dawn stole into the little room; the sun rose slowly, and Susan peered through the small panes of the lattice window at the glorious sight. A few

birds began to chirp, and as the little girl listened to them, her mother started and spoke in her sleep. Susan quickly hung up a white apron before the window to keep out the light, and at the same moment she heard in the distance the voices of the village children singing their Mayday songs. Soon she could see them, Philip leading the way playing upon his pipe and tabor, the others following with nosegays and garlands in their hands. They were coming towards the cottage. Quickly but quietly Susan unlatched the door and ran to meet them.

'Here she is!—here's Susan!' they exclaimed joyfully.

'Here's the Queen of the May!'

'And here's her crown!' cried Rose, pressing forward.

But Susan put her finger upon her lips, and pointed to her mother's window. Philip's pipe stopped at once.

'Thank you,' said Susan, 'but my mother is ill. I can't leave her, you know.' Then as she gently put aside the crown, her companions asked her to say who should wear it for her.

'Will you, dear Rose?' she said, placing the garland upon her friend's head. 'It's a charming May morning,' she added, with a smile; 'good-bye. We shall not hear your voices or the pipe when you have turned the corner into the village, so you need only stop until then, Philip.'

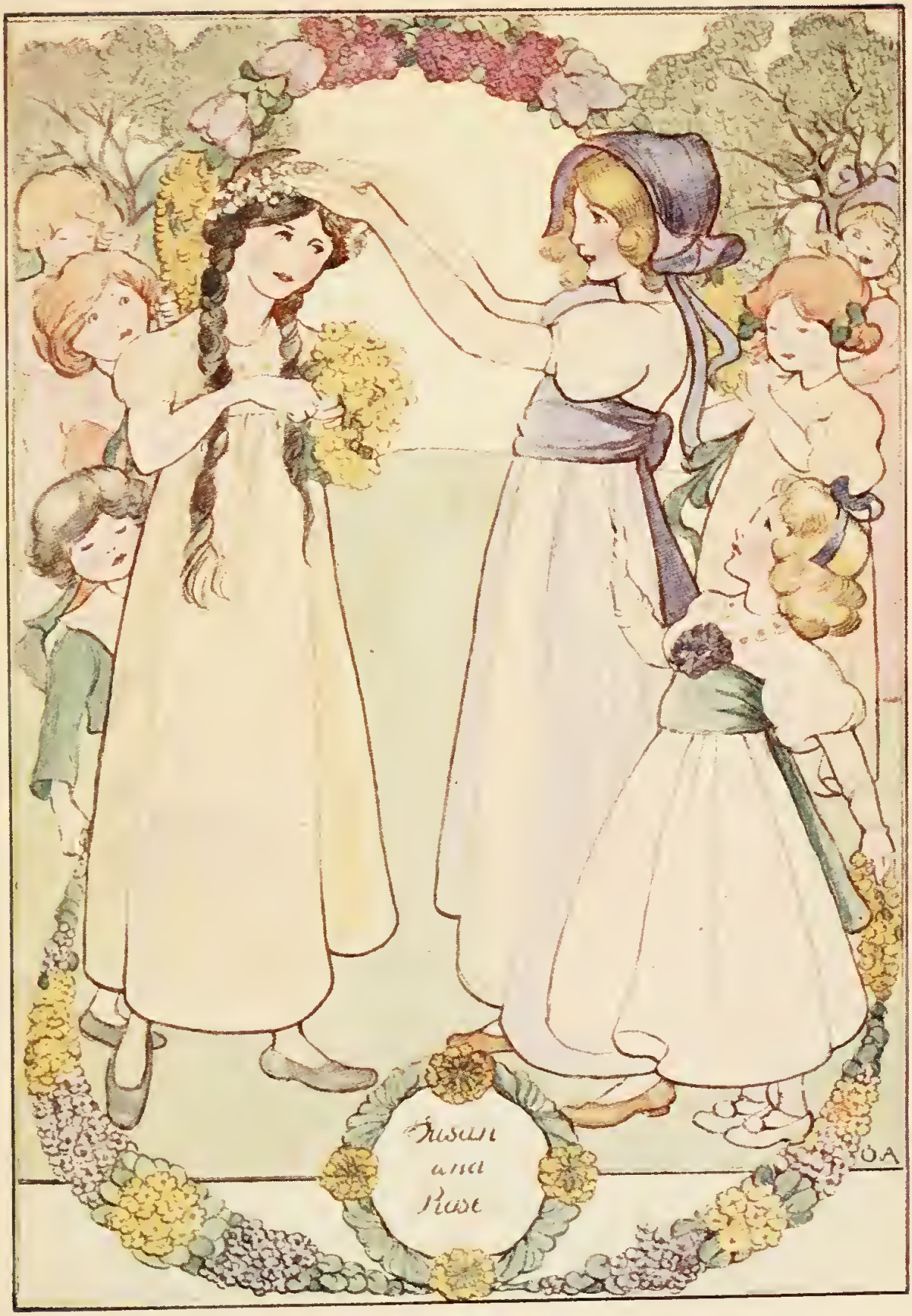
'I shall stop for all day,' said Philip: 'I've no wish to play any more.'

'Good-bye, poor Susan! It is a pity you can't come with us,' said all the children.

Little Mary ran after Susan to the cottage door. 'I forgot to thank you,' she said, 'for the cowslips. Look how pretty they are, and smell how sweet the violets are that I wear, and kiss me quick or I shall be left behind.'

Susan kissed the little breathless girl, and returned softly to the side of her mother's bed. 'How grateful that child is to me for a cowslip only! How can I be grateful enough to such a mother as this?' she said to herself, as she bent over the pale face of her sleeping mother.

Her mother's unfinished knitting lay upon a table near the bed, and Susan sat down in her wicker arm-chair, and went on with the row,


Susan
and
Rose

in the middle of which Mrs. Price had stopped the evening before. 'She taught me to knit, she taught me everything that I know,' thought Susan, 'and best of all, she taught me to love her, to wish to be like her.'

Mrs. Price, when she awoke, felt much better, but slowly there came back to her memory the sad news she had heard the evening before. She asked herself if it could have been a dream, but no, it was all too true. She could recall her husband's look as he had said, 'I must leave you in three days.' Then suddenly she roused herself. 'Why! he'll want, he'll want a hundred things,' she said. 'I must get his linen ready for him. I'm afraid it's very late. Susan, why did you let me sleep so long?'

'Everything shall be ready, dear mother; only don't hurry,' said Susan. And indeed her mother was not able to bear any hurry, or to do any work that day. Susan's loving help was never more wanted. She understood so well, she obeyed so exactly, and when she was left to herself, judged so wisely, that her mother had little trouble in directing her. She

said that Susan never did too little or too much.

Susan was mending her father's linen, when Rose tapped softly at the window, and beckoned to her to come out. She went.

'How is your mother, in the first place?' said Rose.

'Better, thank you.'

'That is nice, and I have a little bit of good news for you besides—here,' she said, pulling out a purse, in which there was money. 'We'll get the guinea-hen back again—we have all agreed about it. This is the money that has been given to us in the village this May morning. At every door they gave silver. See how generous they have been—twelve shillings. Now we are a match for Miss Barbara. You won't like to leave home, so I'll go to her, and you shall see your guinea-hen in ten minutes.'

Rose hurried away, filled with joy at the thought that soon she would return to Susan with her lost bird.

Miss Barbara's maid, Betty, was the first person she saw on reaching the Attorney's

house. Rose said she must see Barbara and was shown into a parlour where the young lady sat reading a book.

'How you startled me! Is it only you?' she said, looking up and seeing no one but the maid. Then, as she caught sight of Rose, she went on, 'You should have said I was not at home. Pray, my good girl, what do you want?' she said, turning to Rose. 'Is it to borrow or to beg that you are here?'

'The person from whom I come does not wish either to borrow or to beg, but to pay for what she asks,' answered Rose. Then opening her well-filled purse, she held out to Barbara a bright shilling, saying, 'Now please be so good as to give me Susan's guinea-hen.'

'You may keep your shilling,' replied Barbara. 'It would have been enough if it had been paid yesterday when I asked for it, but I told Susan that as it was not paid then I should keep the hen, and I shall. You may go back and tell her so.'

While Barbara spoke she had been looking into the open purse in Rose's hand. She thought she could count at least ten shillings.

Could she not manage to get at least five of them for the guinea-hen, she wondered?

Rose little guessed what was going on in Barbara's mind, and exclaimed angrily, 'We must have Susan's favourite hen, whatever it costs. If one shilling won't do, take two. If two won't do, take three,' and she flung the coins one after the other on the table.

'Three won't do,' said Barbara.

'Then take four.'

Barbara shook her head.

A fifth shilling was offered, but Barbara, seeing that she had the game in her own hands, was silent.

Then Rose threw down shilling after shilling, till twelve bright pieces lay on the table, and her purse was empty.

'Now you may take the guinea-hen,' said Barbara.

Rose pushed the money towards the greedy girl, but at the same moment remembered that it had not belonged to herself alone. At once she seized the silver coins, and saying that she must first see if the friends with whom she shared them were willing to part with them, she ran off.

When the children heard Rose's story, they were amazed that even Barbara could be so mean, but they all agreed that at any cost the guinea-fowl must be set free. In a body they went to Susan and told her so, at the same time handing her the purse. Then they ran off without waiting to be thanked. Rose only stayed behind.

Susan knew that she must accept a present gladly, just as she would give one gladly. She was much touched by the kindness of her friends, but she took the purse as simply as she would have given it.

'Well,' said Rose, 'shall I go back for the guinea-hen?'

'The guinea-hen!' said Susan, starting from a dream into which she had fallen as she looked at the purse. 'Certainly I do long to see my pretty guinea-hen once more; but I was not thinking of her just then—I was thinking of my father.'

Now Susan had often that day heard her mother wish that she had but money enough in the world to pay to the man who was willing to be trained to fight instead of her husband.

'This, to be sure, will go but a little way,' thought Susan; 'but still it may be of some use.' She told her thought to Rose, and ended by saying that if the money was given to her to spend as she pleased, she would give it to her father.

'It is all yours, my dear, good Susan!' cried Rose. 'This is so like you!—but I'm sorry that Miss Bab must keep your guinea-hen. I would not be her for all the guinea-hens, or guineas either, in the whole world. Why, the guinea-hen won't make her happy, and you'll be happy even without it, because you are good. Let me come and help you to-morrow,' she went on, looking at Susan's work, 'if you have any more mending to do—I never liked work till I worked with you. I won't forget my thimble or my scissors,' she added, laughing—'though I used to forget them when I was a wilder girl. I assure you I am clever with my needle now,—try me.'

Susan told her friend that she would most gladly accept her help, but that she had finished all the needle-work that was wanted at present. 'But do you know,' she went on, 'I shall be

very busy to-morrow. I won't tell you what it is that I have to do, for I am afraid I shall not succeed, but if I do succeed, I'll come and tell you directly, because you will be so glad.'

CHAPTER IV

SUSAN VISITS THE ABBEY

Susan, who had always been attentive to what her mother taught her, and who had often helped her when she was baking bread and cakes for the family at the Abbey, now thought that she could herself bake a batch of bread. One of the new servants from the Abbey had been sent all round the village in the morning in search of loaves, and had not been able to procure any that were eatable. Mrs. Price's last baking had failed for want of good yeast. She was not now strong enough to attempt another herself, and when the brewer's boy came to tell her that he had some fine fresh yeast, she thanked him, but sighed and said she feared it would be of little use to her.

But Susan went to work with great care, and the next morning when her bread came out of

the oven, it was excellent: at least her mother said so, and she was a good judge. It was sent to the Abbey, and as the family had not tasted any good bread since they had come there, they also were warm in its praise. With some surprise, they heard from the housekeeper that this excellent bread was made by a young girl only twelve years old.

The housekeeper, who had known Susan since she was a child, was pleased to have a chance to speak about her.

'She is the busiest little creature, ma'am, in the world,' she said to her mistress. 'I can't so well call her little now though, since she's grown tall and slender to look at; and glad I am she is grown up good to look at; for handsome is that handsome does, ma'am. She thinks no more of her being handsome than I do myself; yet she has as proper a respect for herself, ma'am, as you have; and I always see her neat, and she is always with her mother, or fit people, as a girl should be. As for her mother, she dotes upon her, as well she may; for I should myself if I had half such a daughter, ma'am; and then she has two little brothers, and she's as

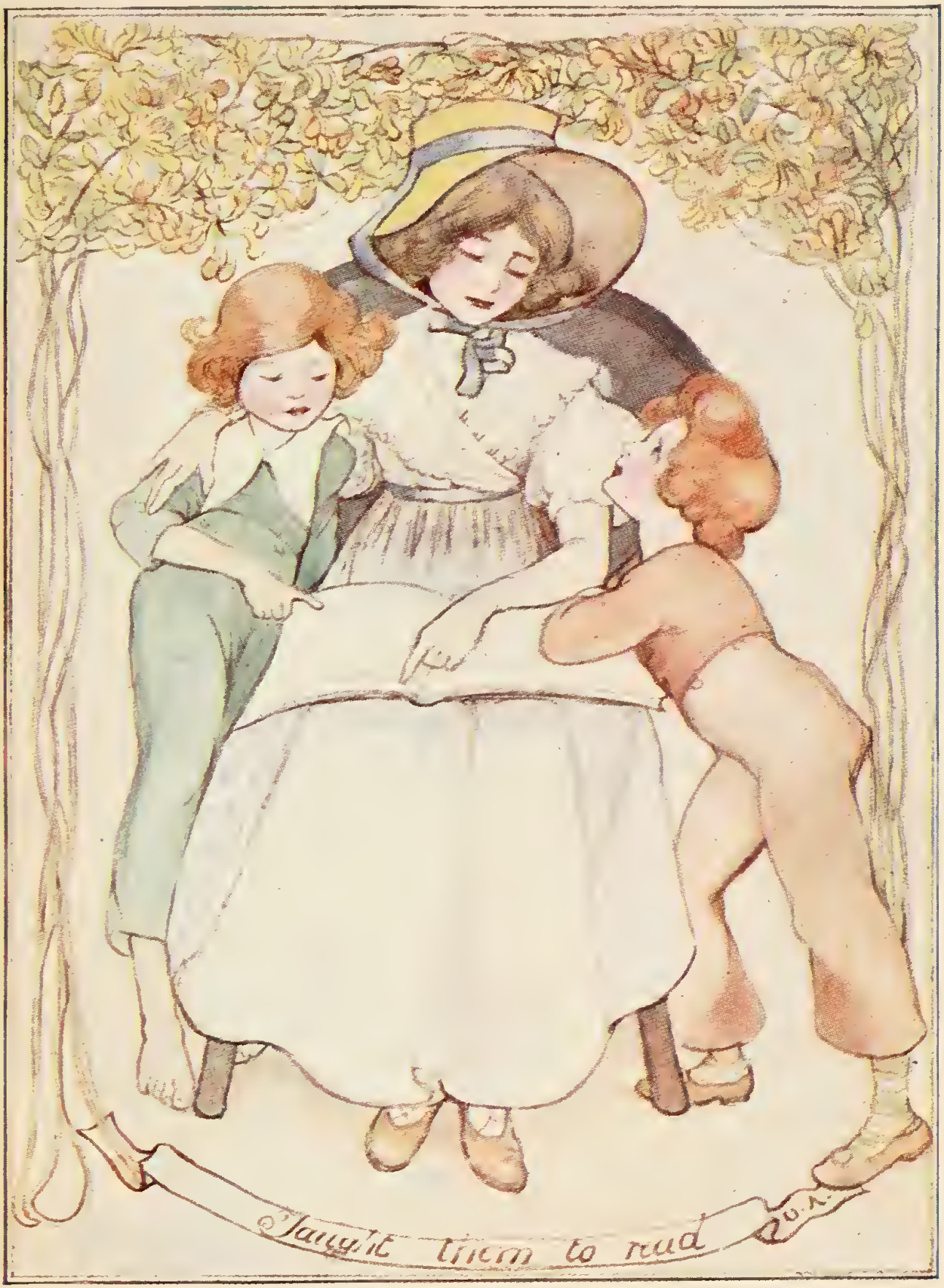
good to them and, my boy Philip says, taught them to read more than the school-mistress did; but I beg your pardon, ma'am, I cannot stop myself when I once begin to talk of Susan.'

'You have really said enough to make me wish to see her,' said her mistress. 'Pray send for her now; we can see her before we go out to walk.'

The kind housekeeper gladly sent off her boy Philip for Susan, who was never so untidy that she could not come at once when sent for. She had been very busy, but orderly people can be busy and neat at the same time. Putting on her usual straw hat, she set out for the Abbey. On the way she overtook Rose's mother, who was going there too with a basket of fresh muslin.

When Susan reached the Abbey, her simple dress and manners and the good sense with which she answered the questions put to her, pleased the ladies greatly. They saw that the housekeeper had not spoken too highly of the farmer's daughter.

These two ladies were the sisters of Sir


Taught them to read

Arthur Somers. They were kind and wise; kind in wishing to spread happiness among their poor neighbours, and wise in wishing these people to be happy in their own way. They did not wish to manage them, but only to help them. As Sir Arthur was always willing to aid his sisters, it seemed as if they would prove a blessing in the village near which they had come to live.

When Susan took leave of the ladies, she was told they would call at her home that evening at six o'clock.

Such a grand event as Susan's visit to the Abbey soon became known to Barbara Case and her maid, and together they watched for her return.

'There she is! She has just gone into her garden,' cried Bab; 'we'll run in at once and hear all about it.'

Susan was gathering some marigolds and parsley for her mother's soup. 'Well, Susan, and how are things going with you to-day?' asked Barbara.

'My mother is rather better, she says; thank you, ma'am.'

'"Ma'am," how polite we have grown all of a sudden!' said Bab, winking at her maid. 'One can see you have been in good company. Come, tell us all about it.'

'Did you see the ladies themselves,' asked Betty, 'or only the housekeeper?'

'What room were you in?' went on Bab. 'Did you see Miss Somers or Sir Arthur?'

'Miss Somers,' replied Susan.

'Betty, she saw Miss Somers! I must hear about it. Susan, stop gathering those things, and have a chat with us.'

'I can't indeed, Miss Barbara, for my mother wants her soup, and I am in a hurry.' And Susan ran home.

'Would you believe it, her head is full of soup now?' said Bab to her maid. 'She seems to think nothing of her visit to the Abbey. My papa may well call her *Simple Susan.* But simple or not I mean to get what I want out of her. Maybe when she has settled the grand matter of the soup, she'll be able to speak. I'll step in and ask to see her mother. That will put her in a good humour in a trice.'

Barbara went to the cottage and found Susan

standing over a pot on the fire. 'Is the soup ready?' she asked. 'I'll wait till you take it in to your mother and go in with you. I want to ask her how she is, myself.'

'Sit down then, miss,' said Susan. 'I have put in the parsley, so the soup is nearly ready.'

Barbara sat down and plied Susan with questions. How was Miss Somers dressed? Were the sisters dressed alike? What were they having for dinner at the Abbey? Above all, what could Miss Somers mean by saying she would call at Farmer Price's cottage at six o'clock that evening? 'What do you think she could mean?' asked Barbara.

'What she said,' replied Susan, 'that she would be here at six o'clock.'

'That's plain enough,' said Barbara, 'but what else do you think she meant? People, you know, often mean more or less than they say.'

'They do,' answered Susan, with a smile that made Barbara guess of whom she was thinking.

But Bab did not mean Susan to know that she guessed, so she said, 'I suppose you think

that Miss Somers meant more than she said?'

'I was not thinking of Miss Somers when I said what I did,' replied Susan.

There was a pause, and then Bab remarked, 'How nice the soup looks!'

Susan had poured it into a basin, and as she dropped over it the bright yellow marigold, it looked very tempting. She tasted it and added a little salt; tasted it again, and added a little more. Then she thought it was just as her mother liked it.

'Oh, I must taste it!' said Bab, seizing the basin greedily.

'Won't you take a spoon?' said Susan, trembling as she saw the big mouthfuls Barbara took with a loud noise.

'Take a spoon, indeed!' exclaimed Bab. 'How dare you, how dare you speak so to me? "Take a spoon, pig!" was what you meant to say. I'll never enter your cottage again.' And she flounced out of the house.

Susan stood still, amazed at the beginning of Barbara's speech, but her last words explained the sudden outburst.

Some years before this time, when Susan was a very little girl and could scarcely speak, as she was eating a basin of bread and milk for supper at the cottage door, a great pig came up and put his nose into the basin. Susan was willing that the pig should have some share of the bread and milk, but as she ate with a spoon and he with his large mouth, she soon found that he was likely to have more than his share; and she said to him, 'Take a poon, pig.' The saying became a proverb in the village, and Susan's little companions quoted it when any one claimed more than his share of anything good. Barbara, who was then not Miss Barbara, but plain Bab, and who played with all the poor children in the village, was often reproved by Susan's proverb. Susan, as she grew up, forgot the childish saying, but Barbara remembered it, and it was this that she thought was in Susan's mind when she asked her to take a spoon.

'Indeed, miss,' said Betty, when she found Barbara in a passion upon her return from the cottage, 'indeed I wonder you set your foot within the door. Your own papa has been at

the Abbey all morning, and you can hear all you wish to know from him.'

Barbara at once ran to her father's parlour, but saw at a glance that he was in no mood to answer questions. Instead of leaving him alone, she did all in her power to find out why he had been at the Abbey, and what he had seen and heard there. And when she found that her father would tell her nothing, she ran back to her maid, saying, 'Papa is so cross. I cannot put up with him.'

CHAPTER V

SUSAN'S PET LAMB

It is true that Attorney Case was not in a happy mood. His visit to the Abbey had made him feel sure that Sir Arthur and he would not agree about the treatment of the farmers who lived on the estate. One matter they had talked about was Sir Arthur's wish to enlarge his grounds and make a drive round them. A map of the estate lay upon the table and they looked at it together.

'Ah! but I see this new road for the drive would run through Farmer Price's garden,' said Sir Arthur. 'That would never do.'

'It need not trouble you,' said Attorney Case, 'you may do as you like with Price's land.'

'How so?' asked Sir Arthur. 'His lease will not be out for ten years, I believe.'

'True, that would have been the case had there not been a mistake in it. I have the

lease and can show you.' The heartless man then went on to explain to Sir Arthur what the mistake was.

Sir Arthur remained silent.

'Oh! I see,' said the Attorney. 'You do not wish to annoy Farmer Price. But just put the matter into my hands and I will manage it for you.'

'You seem to forget that to take the farm out of this poor man's hands would be to ruin him,' replied Sir Arthur, quietly.

'Indeed,' said the wicked Attorney, 'indeed I should be sorry for that, if it were not that Farmer Price is such an unruly, stubborn man.'

'An unruly man, is he? If that be so, the sooner he leaves the place the better. When you go home, you will be good enough to send me the lease that I may, for myself, see the mistake.'

Attorney Case got up to go. But before he went, he thought he must try to find out if Sir Arthur was going to employ him to look after the estate, that is, if he was to be the agent. 'I will not trouble you about this lease,

Sir Arthur,' he said, 'but will hand it to your agent, if you will inform me who is to have that post.'

'I mean to be my own agent,' answered Sir Arthur, 'and will myself look after the happiness of the people among whom I have come to live.'

It was the surprise of this reply that had sent Attorney Case home so cross that Barbara had said to Betty she could not put up with him.

When his daughter had left him alone, the Attorney walked up and down the room deep in thought. 'At any rate,' he said to himself at last, 'if Sir Arthur means to manage the estate himself in summer, he at least will need an agent in winter. I must try to get the post.' And he still walked up and down, trying to think of some plan by which he would find favour at the Abbey.

Now that morning he had heard the housekeeper at the Abbey ask the servants if any lamb were to be had in the village, as Sir Arthur would like to have it one day soon for dinner.

Knowing that he himself treated those farmers best who from time to time gave him presents, Attorney Case thought that if he sent a gift to Sir Arthur, it might help him to get what he wished.

No sooner had the idea struck him than the Attorney went to the kitchen. Standing at the door was a shepherd boy. Barbara, too, was there.

'Do you know of a nice fat lamb?' the Attorney asked the lad.

Before the shepherd boy could answer, Barbara exclaimed, 'I know of one. Susan Price has a pet lamb that is as fat as fat can be.'

At once Attorney Case walked over to Farmer Price's cottage. He found Susan packing her father's little wardrobe, and as she looked up, he saw she had been in tears.

'How is your mother to-day, Susan?' inquired the Attorney.

'Worse, sir. My father goes to-morrow.'

'That 's a pity.'

'It can't be helped,' said Susan, with a sigh.

'It can't be helped—how do you know that?' said Mr. Case.

'Sir, dear sir!' cried she, looking up at him, and a sudden ray of hope beamed in her sweet face.

'What if you could help it, Susan?' he said.

Susan clasped her hands in silence.

'You can help it, Susan.' She started up. 'What would you give now to have your father at home for a whole week longer?'

'Anything!—but I have nothing.'

'Yes, you have a lamb,' said the hard-hearted Attorney.

'My poor little Daisy!' said Susan; 'but what good can she do?'

'What good can any lamb do? Is not lamb good to eat? Why do you look so pale, girl? Are not sheep killed every day, and don't you eat mutton? Is your lamb better than anybody else's, think you?'

'I don't know,' said Susan, 'but I love her dearly.'

'More silly you,' said he.

'She feeds out of my hand, she follows me about; I have always taken care of her; my mother gave her to me.'

'Well, say no more about it, then; if you

love your lamb better than both your father and your mother, keep it, and good morning to you.'

'Stay, oh stay!' cried Susan, catching his coat with an eager, trembling hand;—'a whole week, did you say? My mother may get better in that time. No, I do not love Daisy half so well.' The struggle in her mind ceased, and with a calm voice she said, 'Take the lamb.'

'Where is it?' said the Attorney.

'Grazing in the meadow, by the river-side.'

'It must be brought up before nightfall for the butcher, remember.'

'I shall not forget it,' said Susan, steadily.

As soon, however, as the cruel man turned his back and left the house, Susan sat down, and hid her face in her hands. She was soon roused by the sound of her mother's feeble voice calling her from the inner room where she lay. Susan went in.

'Are you there, love? I thought I heard some strange voice just now talking to my child. Something's amiss, Susan,' her mother went on, raising herself as well as she could in bed, to look at her daughter's face.

'Would you think it amiss, then, my dear mother,' said Susan, stooping to kiss her—'would you think it amiss if my father was to stay with us a week longer?'

'Susan! you don't say so?'

'He is, indeed, a whole week;—but how burning hot your hand is still.'

'Are you sure he will stay?' asked her mother. 'How do you know? Who told you so? Tell me all, quick!'

'Attorney Case told me so; he can get him leave for a week longer, and he has promised he will.'

'God bless him for it for ever and ever!' said the poor woman, joining her hands. 'May the blessing of Heaven be with him!'

Susan was silent. The next moment she was called out of the room, for a messenger had come from the Abbey for the bread bill. Susan always made out the bills, for although she had not had many writing lessons, she had taken great pains to learn, and wrote in a neat, clear hand. It is true she was in no mood to write or add now, but the work must be done.

Having carefully ruled lines for the pounds,

shillings and pence, she made out the bill and gave it to the boy who waited for it. Then she said to herself she would make out the other bills, for many of the people in the village had bought a few loaves and rolls of her making. 'And when these are done, I may go down to the meadow to take leave of my poor lamb.'

But Susan could not find her slate, and when she did find it many of the figures were blurred, for Barbara had sat upon it. And then the numbers seemed to dance before her, and each time that she added, the answer was different. She went over and over the sums until her head ached.

The table was covered with little square bits of paper on which she had written the bills when her father came in, holding in his hand an account.

'Look at this, Susan!' he said, handing it to her. 'How could you be so careless, child? What have you been thinking about to let a bill like that go to the Abbey? Luckily, I met the messenger and asked to see how much it was. Look at it.'

Susan looked and blushed. Instead of 'loaves'

she had written 'lambs.' She altered the mistake and handed the bill to her father. He, meantime, was looking at the papers lying on the table.

'What are all these, child?' he asked.

'Some of them were wrong, and I wrote them out again.'

'Some of them! All of them as far as I can see,' said her father rather angrily, pointing to the papers.

Susan read the bills. Most of them were for lambs instead of for loaves or rolls. Her thoughts had indeed been running upon the pet she was to part with so soon.

Once more she wrote the bills, and her father, who was struck by the patient way she set to work, said he would himself collect the money. He would be proud to be able to say to the neighbours that it was all earned by his own little daughter.

Susan heard him sigh as he passed the knapsack she had packed for him, but she thought she would keep the pleasure of telling him of his week's leave until he came home. He had said he would have supper in her

mother's room. She would tell the good news then. 'How delighted he will be when he hears,' she said to herself, 'but I know he will be sorry too for poor Daisy.'

Susan thought she would now have time to run down to the meadow by the river-side to see her favourite, but just as she had tied on her straw hat the clock struck four. This was the hour at which she always went to fetch her brothers from the school near the village. So, as she knew that the little boys would be sorry if she were late, she put off her visit to the lamb and went at once to meet them.

CHAPTER VI

THE BLIND HARPER

The dame-school, which was about a mile from the village, was a long, low house with a thatched roof. It was sheltered by a few old oaks, under which the grandparents and great-grandparents of the children now at school had played long ago. The play-green sloped down from the front of the school, and was enclosed by a rough paling.

The children obeyed and loved the dame who taught them, for she was ever quick to praise them when they did well, and to give them all the pleasure she could. Susan had been taught by her, and the dame often told her little pupils that they must try to be like her, wise and modest, gentle and kind. As she now opened the gate, she heard the merry voices of the little ones, and saw them streaming out of the narrow door and scattering over the green.

'Oh, there's Susan!' cried her two little brothers, running, leaping and bounding up to her; and many of the other rosy boys and girls crowded round her to tell of their games.

Susan always liked to hear of all that made others happy, but she had to tell the children that if they all spoke at once she would not be able to hear what any of them said.

The voices were still raised one above the other, all eager to tell about ninepins, or marbles, or tops or bows and arrows, when suddenly music was heard. The children at once became silent, and looked round to see whence the sound came.

Susan pointed to the great oak-tree, and they saw, sitting under its shade, an old man playing upon his harp. The children all drew near quietly, for the music was solemn; but as the harper heard little footsteps coming towards him, he played one of his more lively tunes.

The merry troop pressed nearer and nearer to the old man. Then some of those who were in front whispered to each other, 'He is blind.' 'What a pity!' 'He looks very poor.' 'What

a ragged coat he wears!' 'He must be very old, for his hair is white; and he must have come a long way, for his shoes are quite worn out.'

All this was said while the harper tuned his harp. When he once more began to play, not a word was spoken, but every now and again there was a cry of delight.

The old man then let the children name the airs they would like best to hear. Each time Susan spoke, he turned his face quickly to where she stood, and played the tune she asked for over and over again.

'I am blind,' he said, 'and cannot see your faces, but I can tell something about each of you by your voices.'

'Can you indeed?' cried Susan's little brother William, who was now standing between the old man's knees. 'It was my sister Susan who spoke last. Can you tell us something about her?'

'That I can, I think,' said the harper, lifting the little boy on his knee. 'Your sister Susan is good-natured.'

William clapped his hands.

'And good-tempered.'

'Right,' said little William, clapping louder than before.

'And very fond of the little boy who sits on my knee.'

'Oh! right, right, quite right!' exclaimed the child, and 'quite right' echoed on all sides.

'But how do you know so much, when you are blind?' said William, looking hard at the old man.

'Hush!' whispered John, who was a year older than his brother and very wise, 'you should not remind him that he is blind.'

'Though I am blind,' said the harper, 'I can hear, you know, and I heard from your sister herself all that I told you of her, that she was good-tempered and good-natured and fond of you.'

'Oh, that's wrong—you did not hear all that from her, I'm sure,' said John, 'for nobody ever hears her praising herself.'

'Did not I hear her tell you,' said the harper, 'when you first came round me, that she was in a great hurry to go home, but that she would stay a little while, since you wished it

so much? Was not that good-natured? And when you said you did not like the tune she liked best, she was not angry with you, but said, "Then play William's first, if you please." Was not that good-tempered?'

'Oh, yes,' said William, 'it's all true; but how did you find out that she was fond of me?'

'That is such a hard question,' said the harper, 'that I must take time to think.'

He tuned his harp, as he thought, or seemed to think, and at this instant two boys, who had been searching for birds' nests in the hedges and who had heard the sound of the harp, came blustering up, and pushing their way through the circle, one of them exclaimed, 'What's going on here? Who are you, my old fellow? A blind harper! Well, play us a tune, if you can play a good one—play—let's see, what shall he play, Bob?' added he, turning to his companion. 'Play "Bumper Squire Jones."'

The old man, though he did not seem quite pleased with the way in which he was asked, played 'Bumper Squire Jones.' Several other

tunes were afterwards named by the same rough voice.

The little children shrunk back shyly, as they looked at the bold boy. He was the son of Attorney Case, and as his father had not cured his temper when he was a child, it became worse and worse as he grew up. All who were younger and weaker than himself were afraid of him and disliked him.

When the old harper was so tired that he could play no more, a lad who usually carried his harp for him came up, and held his master's hat to those around, saying, 'Will you please remember us?' The children readily gave their halfpence to this poor, good-natured man, who had taken so much pains to amuse them. It pleased them better even than to give them to the gingerbread woman, whose stall they loved to visit. The hat was held some time to the Attorney's son before he chose to see it. At last he put his hand into his pocket and pulled out a shilling. There was sixpenny-worth of halfpence in the hat. 'I'll take these halfpence,' said he, 'and here's a shilling for you.'

'God bless you, sir,' said the lad; but as he took the shilling which the young gentleman had slyly put into the blind man's hand, he saw that it was not worth one farthing. 'I am afraid it is not good, sir,' said the lad, whose business it was to look at the money for his master.

'I am afraid, then, you 'll get no other,' said young Case, with a rude laugh.

'It never will do, sir, look at it yourself; the edges are all yellow. You can see the copper through it quite plain. Sir, nobody will take it from us.'

'I have nothing to do with that,' said the rude boy, pushing away his hand. 'You may pass it, you know, as well as I do, if you look sharp. You have taken it from me, and I shan't take it back again, I can tell you.'

A whisper of 'that's very unjust,' was heard.

'Who says it's unjust?' cried the Attorney's son sternly, looking down upon his judges.

'Is any one here amongst yourselves a judge of silver?' said the old man.

'Yes, here's the butcher's boy,' said the Attorney's son; 'show it to him.'

He was a quiet, timid boy, and young Case fancied that he would be afraid to say what he thought. However, after turning the shilling round several times, the butcher's lad said that so far as he could tell, although he would not like to be quite sure of it, the coin was not a good one. Then, seeing the Attorney's son scowl angrily at him, he turned to Susan saying that she knew more than he did about money, as so much passed through her hands in payment of the bread she made.

'I'll leave it to her,' said the old harper. 'If she says the shilling is good, we will keep it.'

The coin was then handed to Susan, who had not yet spoken, but now that she was called upon she did not shrink from telling the truth. In a gentle but firm tone she said, 'I think the shilling is a bad one.'

'There's another then,' cried the Attorney's son; 'I have plenty of shillings and sixpences. They are nothing to me.' And he walked away.

The children now all started for their homes, and the old harper begged that Susan would

show him the way to the village, if she were going there. The lad took up the harp and little William led the old man by the hand, while John ran on before to gather buttercups in the meadow.

When they reached a little brook which they must cross by a narrow plank, Susan was afraid to leave the harper to the care of his little guide, so she herself took his hand and led him safely to the other side.

Soon they reached the road, and Susan told the boy who carried his master's harp that he could not now lose his way. She then said good-bye to the harper, adding that she and her brothers must take the short path across the fields, which would not be so pleasant for him because of the stiles.

'I am afraid Miss Somers will be waiting,' said Susan to her brothers as they ran along together. 'You know she said she would call at six o'clock, and I am sure by the length of our shadows that it is getting late.'

CHAPTER VII

GOOD NEWS

When they came to their own cottage-door, they heard voices, and they saw, when they entered, two ladies standing in the kitchen.

'Come in, Susan,' said Miss Somers, 'I fancy you forgot that we promised to pay you a visit this evening; but you need not blush so much, there is no great harm done; we have only been here about five minutes and we have been admiring your neat garden and your tidy shelves. Is it you, Susan, who keeps these things in such nice order?' went on Miss Somers, looking round the kitchen.

Before Susan could reply, little William pushed forward and answered, 'Yes, ma'am, it is my sister Susan that keeps everything neat; and she always comes to school for us too, which was what caused her to be so late.'

'Because,' went on John, 'she would not

refuse to let us hear a blind man play on the harp. It was we who kept her, and we hope, ma'am, as you seem so good, you won't take it amiss.'

Miss Somers and her sister smiled as they listened to Susan's little brothers, but what they heard made them feel sure that Susan was indeed as kind a sister as the housekeeper had said.

When the ladies left the cottage, they took Susan with them through the village.

'I fancy we shall find what we want here,' said Miss Somers, stopping before a shop-window where ribbons of all colours were displayed, and where lace collars, glass buttons and sheets of pins were laid out in order. They went in, and on the shelves behind the counter saw gay, neat linens and calicoes.

'Now, Susan, choose yourself a gown,' said Miss Somers. 'Because you are a busy girl and behave well, we wish others to see that such is the conduct we approve.'

The shopkeeper was the father of Susan's friend, Rose. He stretched his arm to the highest shelf, then dived into drawers beneath

the counter, sparing no pains to show the best goods to his customers.

Susan did not show the interest that might have been expected. She was thinking much of her lamb and more of her father. Miss Somers had put a bright guinea into her hand and had told her to pay for her own gown. But Susan felt that this was a great deal of money to spend upon a frock for herself, and yet she did not know how to ask if she might keep it for a better purpose.

Although Susan said nothing, Miss Somers read in her face that she was perplexed. 'She does not like any of these things,' whispered the lady to her sister.

'She seems to be thinking of something else,' was the low reply.

'If you do not fancy any of these calicoes,' said the shopkeeper to Susan, 'we shall have a larger choice soon.'

'Oh,' answered Susan, with a smile and a blush, 'these are all too good for me, but——'

'But what, Susan?' asked Miss Somers. 'Tell us what is passing in your little mind.'

Susan said nothing.

'Well then, it does not matter. You do not know us very well yet. When you do, you will not, I am sure, be afraid to be frank. Put the guinea in your pocket and make what use of it you please. From what we know and from what we have heard of you, we are sure you will make a good use of it.'

'I think, madam,' said the shopkeeper, 'I have a pretty good guess what will become of that guinea, but I say nothing.'

'No, that is right,' said Miss Somers; 'we leave Susan to do just as she likes with it, and now we must not keep her any longer. Good-night, Susan, we shall soon come again to your neat cottage.'

Susan curtsied and looked gratefully at the ladies, but did not speak. She wished to say, 'I cannot explain to you here, with people around, what I want to do with my guinea, but when you come to our cottage you shall know all.'

After Susan had left, Miss Somers turned to the obliging shopkeeper who was folding up all the goods he had opened. 'You have had a great deal of trouble,' she said, 'and as

Susan will not choose a gown for herself, I must find one for her,' and she chose the prettiest.

While the man rolled up the parcel, Miss Somers asked him many questions about Susan, and he was only too glad to be able to tell what he knew about the good girl.

'No later than last May morning,' he said, 'Susan acted as it will please you to hear. She was to have been Queen of the May, which among the children in our village is a thing a good deal thought of. But Susan's mother was ill, and Susan, after being up with her all night, would not go out in the morning, even when they brought the crown to her. She put it upon my daughter Rose's head with her own hands, and to be sure Rose loves her as well as if she were her own sister. If I praise Susan it is not that I am any relation of the Prices, but just that I wish her well, as does every one that knows her. I 'll send the parcel up to the Abbey, shall I, ma'am?'

'If you please,' said Miss Somers, 'and as soon as your new goods come in, let us know.

You will, I hope, find us good customers and wellwishers,' she added, with a smile, 'for those who wish others well, surely deserve to have wellwishers themselves.'

But to return to Susan. When she left the shop she carefully put the bright guinea into the purse with the twelve shillings her little friends had given her on Mayday. She next added, as far as she could remember them, the bills for bread that were owing to her, and found they came to about thirty-eight shillings. Then she hoped, that by some means or other, she might, during the week her father was to remain at home, make up the nine guineas that would enable him to stay with them altogether. 'If that could but be,' she said to herself, 'how happy it would make my mother! She is already a great deal better since I told her my father would stay for a week longer. Ah! but she would not have blessed Attorney Case, if she had known about my poor Daisy.'

Susan had now reached the path that led to the meadow by the river-side. She wanted to go there alone and take leave of her lamb.

But her little brothers, who were watching for her return, ran after her as soon as they saw her and overtook her as she reached the meadow.

'What did that good lady want with you?' cried William; but looking up in his sister's face, he saw tears in her eyes, and he was silent and walked on quietly. Susan saw her lamb by the water-side.

'Who are those two men?' said William. 'What are they going to do with Daisy?'

The two men were Attorney Case and the butcher. The butcher was feeling whether the lamb was fat.

Susan sat down upon the bank in silent sorrow. Her little brothers ran up to the butcher and asked whether he was going to do any harm to the lamb. The butcher did not answer, but the Attorney replied, 'It is not your sister's lamb any longer; it's mine.'

'Yours!' cried the children with terror; 'and will you kill it?'

'No, that is what the butcher will do.'

The little boys now burst into loud cries.

They pushed away the butcher's hand; they threw their arms round the neck of the lamb; they kissed its forehead. It bleated. 'It will not bleat to-morrow!' said William, and he wept bitterly.

The butcher looked aside, and hastily rubbed his eyes with the corner of his blue apron. The Attorney stood unmoved; he pulled up the head of the lamb, which had just stooped to crop a mouthful of clover. 'I have no time to waste,' he said. 'Butcher, I leave it to you. If it 's fat—the sooner the better. I 've nothing more to say.' And he walked off, deaf to the prayers of the poor children.

As soon as the Attorney was out of sight, Susan rose from the bank where she was seated, came up to her lamb, and stooped to gather some of the fresh dewy clover, that she might feed her pet for the last time. Poor Daisy licked the well-known hand.

'Now, let us go,' said Susan.

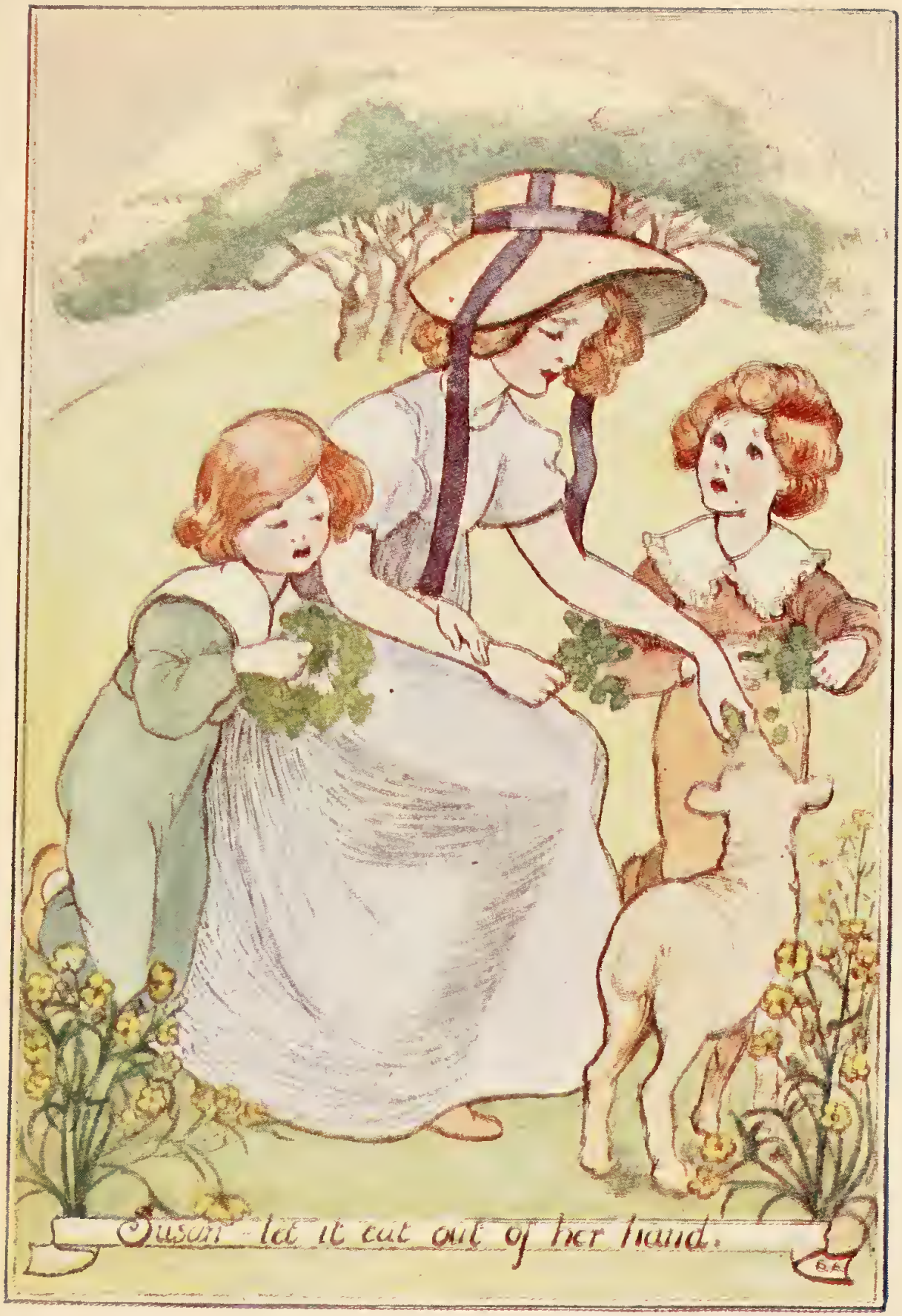
'I 'll wait as long as you please,' said the butcher.

Susan thanked him, but walked away quickly, without looking back. Her little brothers

begged the man to stay a few minutes, for they had gathered a handful of blue speedwell and yellow crowsfoot, and they were decking the poor animal. As it followed the boys through the village, the children looked after them as they passed, and the butcher's own son was amongst the number. The boy remembered Susan's firmness about the shilling, for it had saved him a beating. He went at once to his father to beg him to spare the lamb.

'I was thinking about it myself,' said the butcher. 'It's a sin to kill a pet lamb, I'm thinking. Anyway, it's what I'm not used to, and don't fancy doing. But I've a plan in my head and I'm going straightway to Attorney Case. But he's a hard man, so we'll say nothing to the boys, lest nothing comes of it. Come, lads,' he went on, turning to the crowd of children, 'it is time you were going your ways home. Turn the lamb in here, John, into the paddock for the night.' The butcher then went to the Attorney.

'If it's a good, fat, tender lamb you want for Sir Arthur,' he said, 'I could let you have one


Susan let it eat out of her hand.
B.A.

as good or better than Susan's and fit to eat to-morrow.'

As Mr. Case wished to give the present to Sir Arthur as soon as he could, he said he would not wait for Susan's lamb, but would take the one offered by the butcher.

In the meantime Susan's brothers ran home to tell her that her lamb was put into the paddock for the night. This was all they knew, but even this was some comfort to the poor girl.

Rose was at Farmer Price's cottage that evening, and was to have the pleasure of hearing Susan tell her father the good news that he might stay at home for one week longer. Mrs. Price was feeling better and said that she would sit up to supper in her wicker arm-chair. As Susan began to get ready the meal, little William, who was standing at the house door watching for his father's return, called out suddenly, 'Susan, why here is our old man!'

'Yes,' said the blind harper, 'I have found my way to you. The neighbours were kind enough to show me whereabouts you lived; for, though

I didn't know your name, they guessed who I meant by what I said of you all.'

Susan came to the door, and the old man was delighted to hear her speak again. 'If it would not be too bold,' said he, 'I 'm a stranger in this part of the country, and come from afar off. My boy has got a bed for himself here in the village; but I have no place. Could you be so kind as to give an old blind man a night's lodging?'

Susan said she would step in and ask her mother, and she soon returned with an answer that he was heartily welcome, if he could sleep upon the children's bed, which was but small.

The old man entered thankfully, and, as he did so, struck his head against the low roof. 'Many roofs that are twice as high do not shelter folk so kind,' he said. For he had just come from the house of Mr. Case, and Barbara, who had been standing at the hall door, said he could have no help there.

The old man's harp was set down in Farmer Price's kitchen, and he promised to play a tune for the boys before they went to bed, as their

mother had given them leave to sit up to supper with their father.

The farmer came home with a sad face, but how soon did it brighten, when Susan, with a smile, said to him, 'Father, we've good news for you! good news for us all!—You have a whole week longer to stay with us; and perhaps,' she went on, putting her little purse into his hands,—'perhaps with what's here, and the bread bills and what may somehow be got together before a week's at an end, we may make up the nine guineas. Who knows, dearest mother, but we may keep him with us for ever!'

As she spoke, she threw her arms round her father, who pressed her to him without speaking, for his heart was full. It was some little time before he could believe that what he heard was true; but the smiles of his wife, the noisy joy of his little boys and the delight that shone in Susan's face at last convinced him that he was not in a dream.

As they sat down to supper, the old harper was made welcome to his share of the simple meal.

Susan's father, as soon as supper was finished, even before he would let the harper play a tune for his boys, opened the little purse which Susan had given him. He was surprised at the sight of the twelve shillings, and still more, when he came to the bottom of the purse to see the bright golden guinea.

'How did you come by all this money, Susan?' said he.

'How, I can't make out, except by the baking,' said her proud mother. 'Hey, Susan, is this your first baking?'

'Oh, no, no,' said her father, 'I have the money for her first baking snug here, besides, in my pocket. I kept it for a surprise, to do your mother's heart good, Susan. Here's twenty-nine shillings, and the Abbey bill, which is not paid yet comes to ten more. What think you of this, wife? Have we not a right to be proud of our Susan? Why,' he went on, turning to the harper, 'I ask your pardon for speaking before strangers in praise of my own child; but the truth is the fittest thing to be spoken, I think, at all times. Here's your good health, Susan; why, by and by she'll be

worth her weight in gold—in silver at least. But tell us, child, how came you by all this wealth, and how comes it that I don't go to-morrow? The happy news makes me so gay, I 'm afraid I shall hardly understand it rightly. Speak on, child—but first bring us a bottle of the good mead you made last year from your own honey.'

Susan did not like to tell the story of her guinea-hen, of the gown and of her poor lamb. Part of this would seem as if she were speaking of her own good deeds, and part of it she did not like to remember. But her mother begged to know the whole, and she told it as simply as she could. When she came to the story of her lamb, her voice faltered, and everybody present was touched. The old harper sighed once, and cleared his throat several times. He then asked for his harp, and after tuning it for long, he played the air he had promised to the boys.

CHAPTER VIII

BARBARA VISITS THE ABBEY

The old blind man had come from the mountains of Wales to try to gain a prize of ten guineas. This prize was to be awarded to the harper who should play the best at a large town about five miles from the village where Susan lived. In the evening, after the prize-giving was over, there was to be a ball in the town, so the events of the day were looked forward to by many around.

Barbara was one of those who grew more and more excited as the time for the prize-giving and ball drew near. She longed to be asked to go there by some of the rich neighbours who could drive her in their carriage. So how pleased she was when, on the evening that her father and the butcher were talking about Susan's lamb, a servant in livery from the Abbey left a note for Mr. and Miss

Barbara Case! It was to invite them to dinner and tea at the Abbey next day.

'Now they will find out,' cried Bab, 'that I am indeed a genteel person, and they will wish to take me to the ball. At any rate, I shall do my best to be asked.'

'To be sure,' said Betty, 'a lady who would visit Susan Price might well be glad to take you in her carriage.'

'Then pray, Betty, do not forget to send to town first thing to-morrow for my new bonnet. Without that the ladies of the Abbey will think nothing of me. And I must coax Papa to buy me a new gown for the ball. I shall look well at all the ladies' dresses at the Abbey to-morrow and find out the fashion. And Betty, I have thought of a charming present to take Miss Somers. I shall give her Susan's guinea-hen. It's of no use to me, so carry it up early in the morning to the Abbey, with my compliments.'

Feeling quite sure that her bonnet and the guinea-fowl would make Miss Somers think well of her, Barbara paid her first visit to the Abbey. She expected to see wonders, but

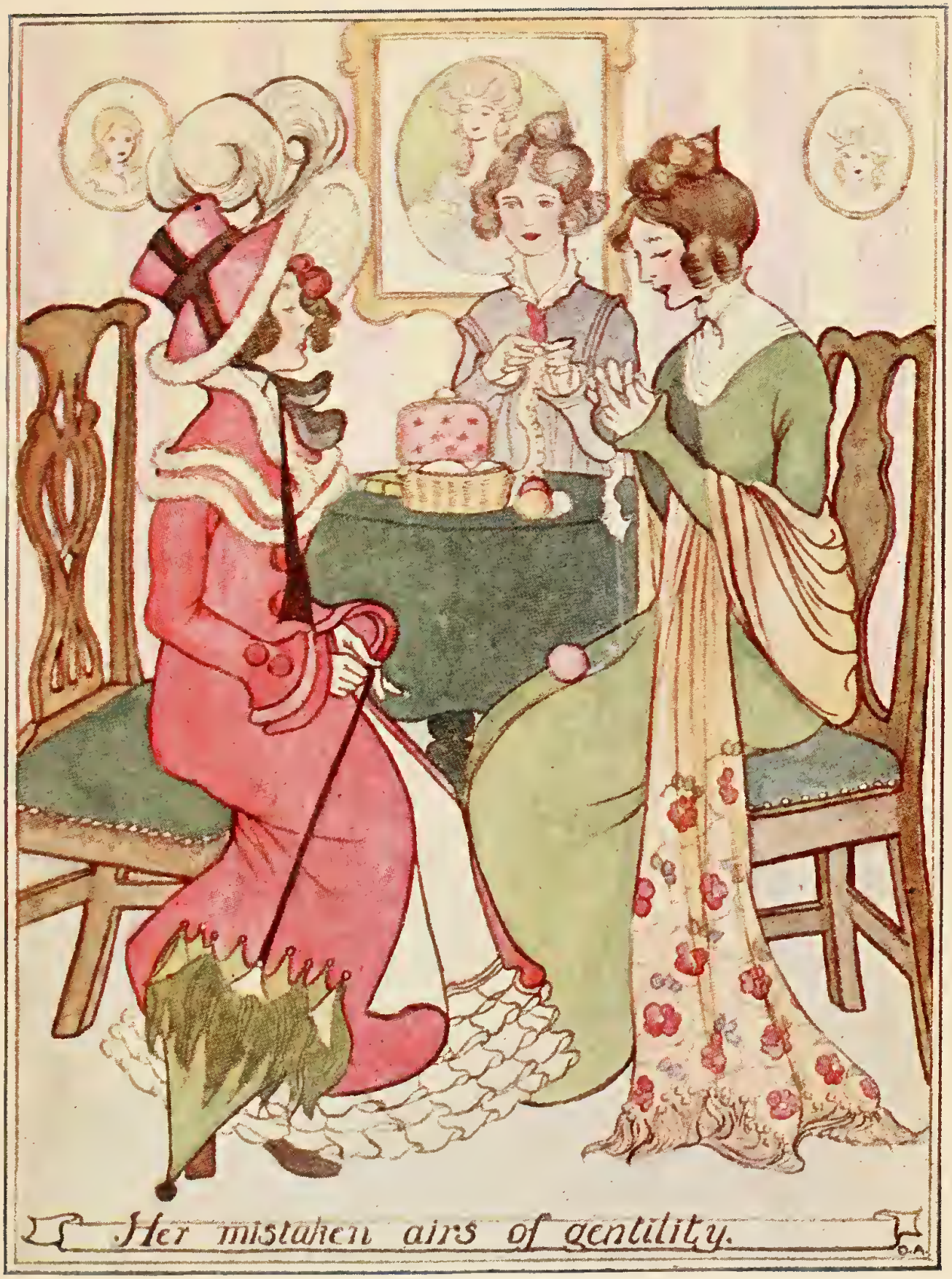
when she was shown into the room where Miss Somers and other ladies were sitting, simply dressed, and with work, books and drawings on the table before them, she was surprised and vexed. There was nothing grand to be seen anywhere.

When Miss Somers tried to find out what would interest her, and talked of walks, and flowers and gardens, Miss Barbara was offended. 'I will show them,' she said to herself, 'that I can talk of other things.' So in a grand tone she spoke of what she did not understand, until her mistaken airs of gentility made the ladies of the Abbey feel first amused and then ashamed.

One by one the ladies left the room, and when Miss Somers went to change her dress for dinner, Barbara was left alone with some pretty drawings to amuse her. But the silly girl paid no heed to these. She could think only of the ball.

Suddenly she remembered that nothing had been said about the guinea-hen.

The truth was that Betty, in the hurry of dressing Barbara for her visit to the Abbey,



Her mistaken airs of gentility.

had forgotten the bird, but it arrived just as Miss Somers was dressing. The housekeeper went to her mistress's room to say it had come.

'Ma'am,' she said, 'here's a beautiful guinea-hen just come with Miss Barbara Case's compliments.'

Miss Somers thought by the housekeeper's tone that she was not quite pleased, and she soon found she was right in thinking so. The woman came close up to the dressing-table, and said, 'I never like to speak till I'm sure, ma'am, and I'm not quite sure in this case, ma'am, but still I think it right to tell you what crossed my mind about this same guinea-hen, ma'am, and you can ask about it or do as you feel best, ma'am. Some time ago we had guinea-fowls of our own, and not knowing they were going to die as they have done, ma'am, I made bold to give a couple last Christmas to Susan Price, and very proud of them she was, ma'am, and I'm sure would never have parted with the hen of her own will. But if my eyes don't deceive me, ma'am, this guinea-hen that Miss Barbara sends to you

with her compliments, is the same that I gave to Susan. How Miss Barbara came by it, I can't tell, ma'am, but if my boy Philip was at home, he might know, for he 's often at Farmer Price's cottage. If you wish it, ma'am, I 'll ask him when he comes home to-night.'

'I think the best way will be for me to ask Miss Case herself about it this evening,' said Miss Somers.

Dinner was now served. Attorney Case expected to smell mint sauce, and as the covers were taken off the dishes he looked around for lamb, but no lamb did he see.

Among other things talked of at table was a carving-knife that Sir Arthur had made for his sister. From this the conversation passed to carving. 'Now is my chance to find out about my present,' thought the Attorney. 'Pray, may I ask,' he said to Sir Arthur, 'how you carve a fore-quarter of lamb?'

Sir Arthur at once saw what the Attorney wanted to hear. Having answered his question, he went on to thank him for the present he had offered, but added, 'I am sorry I cannot accept it, as it is my rule never to accept gifts from

my neighbours. The reason is that our poor tenants cannot show their goodwill in this way, as they have little or nothing to offer.'

Attorney Case listened with surprise. He was annoyed and angry, for he did not understand Sir Arthur's just mind and kind heart.

After the ladies left the dining-room and were walking up and down the large hall, one of them remarked that it would be a charming place for music.

Barbara, who like her father always seized any chance of turning the conversation as best pleased herself, said what a fine instrument was the harp. Then she spoke of the prize-giving to the harpers and of the ball that was to follow. 'I know a good deal about the ball,' she said, 'because a lady in the town where it is to be held offered to take me with her, but although she has a carriage, Papa did not like to let her send it so far.' At this point Barbara fixed her eyes on Miss Somers, that she might, if possible, read her thoughts, but as the lady was at that moment letting down the veil of her hat, her face was not seen.

'Shall we go for a little walk before tea?'

said Miss Somers to the other ladies. 'I have a pretty guinea-hen to show you.' Barbara now felt hopeful, and when even among the pheasants and peacocks the guinea-hen was much admired, she was sure that Miss Somers must indeed be proud to accept her gift.

At this moment Philip came running by on an errand for his mother. As his eye fell upon the guinea-hen, he exclaimed before he knew, 'Why, that is Susan's guinea-hen!'

'No, it is not Susan's guinea-hen,' said Miss Barbara, colouring furiously,[1] 'it is mine, and I have made a present of it to Miss Somers.'

At the sound of Bab's voice, Philip turned round, his face ablaze with anger.

'What is the matter, Philip?' asked Miss Somers in a soothing voice, but Philip was not in the mood to be soothed.

'Why, ma'am, may I speak out?' he asked, and without waiting for leave he gave a full account of the loss of Susan's guinea-fowl, of Rose's visit to Barbara and of Barbara's greedy and cruel conduct.

[1] See frontispiece.

Barbara denied all that Philip said, and told quite another tale. When she could find no more to say she blushed deeply, for she saw that her story was not believed. One might have thought she was covered with shame, had it not been that the moment Philip was out of sight, she exclaimed, 'I am sure I wish I had never seen this wretched guinea-hen! It is all Susan's fault for letting it stray into our garden.'

Barbara was too angry to notice that she was admitting the truth of Philip's story.

'Perhaps,' said Miss Somers, 'Susan will be more careful now that she has had so hard a lesson. Shall we see? Philip will, I am sure, carry the guinea-hen back to her, if we wish it.'

'If you please, ma'am,' said Barbara sulkily.

So the guinea-hen was given to Philip, who set off with joy and was soon in sight of Farmer Price's cottage.

CHAPTER IX

A SURPRISE FOR SUSAN

When Philip came to the door he stopped suddenly, for the idea struck him that it would give Rose great pleasure to carry the guinea-fowl to Susan. So he ran into the village.

All the children who had given up their Mayday money to Susan were playing on the green. They were delighted to see the guinea-hen once more. Philip took his pipe and tabor and they all marched together towards the whitewashed cottage.

As they passed the butcher's house, his boy came out. They told him where they were going.

'Let me come with you, let me come with you,' he said. 'But wait one moment, for my father has something to say to you,' and he darted into the house. The children waited. In a few moments they heard the bleating of a

lamb, and soon they saw it being gently led by the butcher from the paddock.

'It is Daisy!' exclaimed Rose.

'It is Daisy!' they all shouted with joy, 'Susan's lamb! Susan's lamb!'

'Well, for my part,' said the good butcher, as soon as he could be heard, 'for my part I would not be so cruel as Attorney Case for the whole world. It's true the lamb did not know what was before it, but poor Susan did, and to wring her gentle heart was what I call cruel. But at any rate, here it is, safe and sound now. I'd have taken it to her sooner, but was off early this morning to the fair, and am but just come back. Daisy, though, was as well off in my paddock as in the field by the waterside.'

The troop of happy children went on their way with the guinea-fowl and the lamb. As they passed the shop where Susan had been shown the pretty calicoes, the shopkeeper who, you remember, was Rose's father, came out. When he saw the lamb, and learned whose it was and heard its story, he gave the children some pieces of coloured ribbon with which Rose decorated Susan's favourite.

The children now once more moved on, led by Philip, who played joyfully upon his pipe and tabor.

Susan was working in her summer-house, with her little deal table before her. When she heard the sound of the music, she put down her work and listened. She saw the crowd of children coming nearer and nearer. They had closed round Daisy, so she did not see her pet, but as they came up to the garden gate she saw that Rose beckoned to her. Philip played as loud as he could, that she might not hear, until the proper moment, the bleating of the lamb. As Susan opened the gate, the children divided, and first she saw, in the midst of her taller friends, little smiling Mary, with the guinea-hen in her arms.

'Come on! Come on!' cried Mary, as Susan started with joyful surprise; 'you have more to see.'

At this instant the music paused. Susan heard the bleating of a lamb, and pressing eagerly forward, she beheld poor Daisy. She burst into tears. 'I did not shed one tear

when I parted with you, my dear little Daisy,' she said. 'It was for my father and mother. I would not have parted with you for any one else in the whole world. Thank you, thank you all,' she added to her companions, who were even gladder for her in her joy than they had been sorry for her in her sorrow. 'Now, if my father was not to go away from us next week and if my mother were quite strong, I should be the happiest person in the world.'

As Susan finished speaking, a voice behind the little listening crowd cried, in a rough tone, 'Let us pass, if you please; you have no right to block the road.' This was the voice of Attorney Case, who was returning with Barbara from his visit to the Abbey. He saw the lamb and tried to whistle as he went on. Barbara also saw the guinea-hen and turned her head another way. Even her new bonnet, in which she had expected to be so much admired, now only served to hide her blushing face.

'I am glad she saw the guinea-hen,' cried Rose, who now held it in her hands.

'Yes,' said Philip, 'she'll not forget Mayday in a hurry.'

'Nor I either, I hope,' said Susan, looking round upon her companions with a most loving smile: 'I hope, whilst I live, I shall never forget your goodness to me last Mayday. Now that I've my pretty guinea-hen safe once more, I should think of returning your money.'

'No! no! no!' was the cry, 'we don't want the money—keep it, keep it—you want it for your father.'

'Well,' said Susan, 'I am not too proud to accept it. I will keep your money for my father. Perhaps some time or other I may be able to earn——'

'Oh,' said Philip, 'don't let us talk of earning; don't let her talk to us of money now; she hasn't had time hardly to look at poor Daisy and her guinea-hen. Come, we had better go and let her have them all to herself.'

The children moved away, but Philip was the very last to stir from the garden gate himself. He stayed, first, to tell Susan that it was Rose who tied the ribbons on Daisy's head. Then he stayed a little longer to let her hear

the story of the guinea-fowl, and to tell her who it was that brought the hen home from the Abbey.

As Philip finished speaking, Susan was already feeding her long-lost favourite. 'My pretty guinea-hen,' said Susan, 'my naughty guinea-hen that flew away from me, you shall never serve me so again. I must cut your nice wings, but I won't hurt you.'

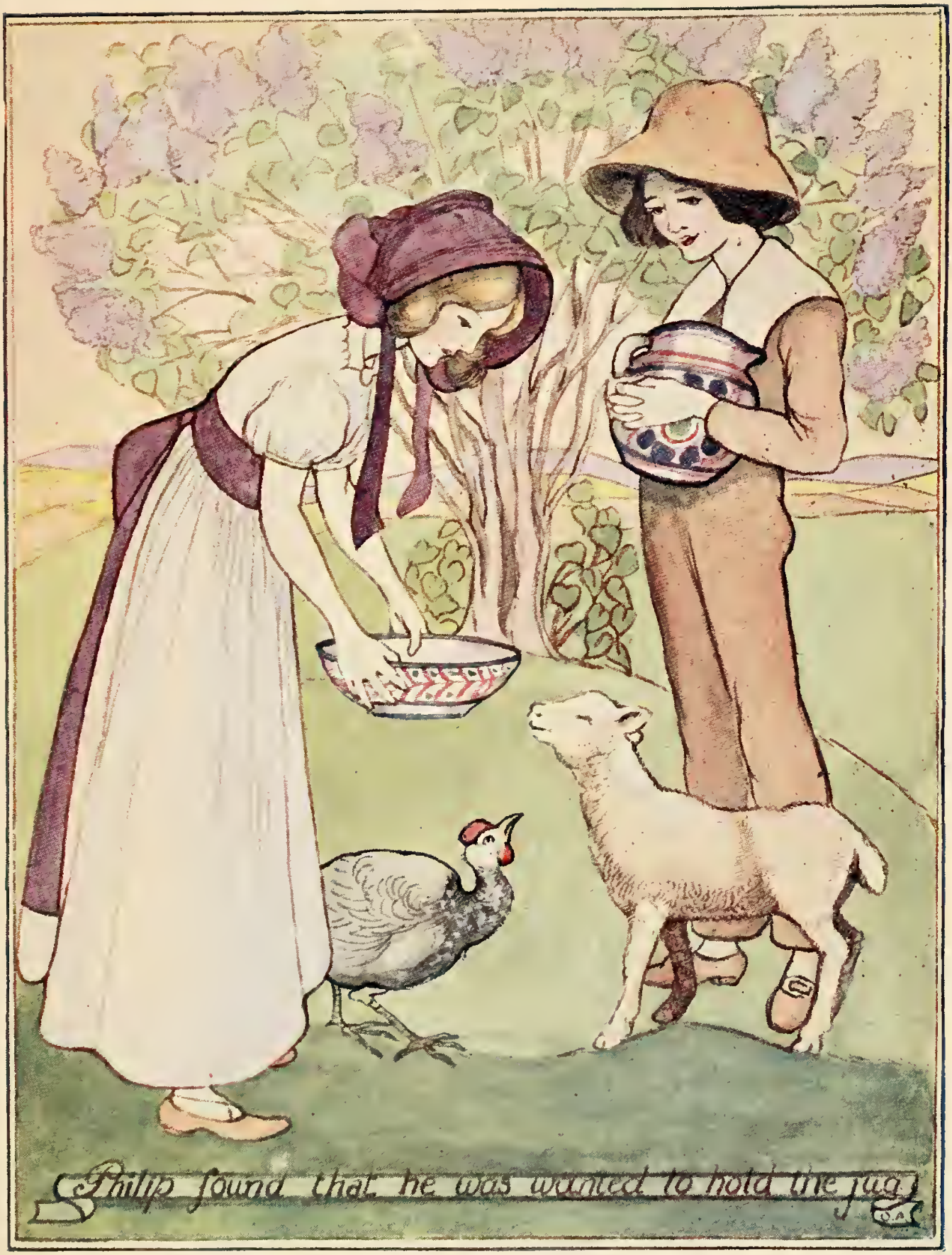
'Take care!' cried Philip, 'you'd better, indeed you'd better let me hold her, whilst you cut her wings.'

When this was done, which it certainly never could have been had Philip not held the hen for Susan, he remembered his mother had given him a message for Mrs. Price. This led to another quarter of an hour's delay, for Philip had the whole story of the guinea-hen to tell over again to Mrs. Price, and as the farmer came in while it was going on, it was only polite to begin at the beginning once more.

Farmer Price was so pleased to see Susan happy again with her two favourites, that he said he must himself see Daisy fed, and Philip

found that he was wanted to hold the jug full of milk, out of which Susan's father filled the pan for Daisy.

When Philip at last left the cottage, Bab and her maid Betty were staring out of the window as usual. Seeing them after he had left the garden, he at once turned back to see if he had shut the gate fast, lest the guinea-hen might stray out and again fall into Barbara's hands.



Philip found that he was wanted to hold the jug

CHAPTER X

BARBARA'S ACCIDENT

As the day went on, Miss Barbara became more and more annoyed that her meanness had been found out, but she had no wish to cure herself of the fault. The ball was still her first thought.

'Well,' she said to Betty, 'you have heard how things have turned out, but if Miss Somers does not ask me to go with her, I think I know some one else who will.'

Now some officers were quartered at the town where the ball was to be held. And because they had got into trouble with a tradesman there, out of which Mr. Case had undertaken to help them, they sometimes invited the Attorney to mess. The officers thought that if they showed some attention to Mr. Case, he would not charge them so much for his help. One of them even asked

his wife to take, sometimes, a little notice of Miss Barbara. The name of this officer's wife was Mrs. Strathspey. It was of Mrs. Strathspey that Barbara was thinking when she said to Betty that if Miss Somers did not take her to the ball, she thought she knew of some one else who would.

'Mrs. Strathspey and the officers are to breakfast here to-morrow,' said Bab. 'One of them dined at the Abbey to-day and he said they would all come. They are going somewhere into the country and breakfast here on the way. Pray, Betty, don't forget that Mrs. Strathspey can't breakfast without honey. I heard her say so myself.'

'Then, indeed,' said Betty, 'I'm afraid Mrs. Strathspey will have to go without breakfast here, for not a spoonful of honey have we, let her long for it ever so much.'

'But, surely,' said Bab, 'we can contrive to get some honey in the neighbourhood.'

'There 's none to be bought, that I know of,' said Betty.

'But is there none to be begged or borrowed?' said Bab, laughing. 'Do you forget Susan's

beehive? Step over to her in the morning with my compliments, and see what you can do. Tell her it 's for Mrs. Strathspey.'

In the morning Betty went with Miss Barbara's compliments to Susan, to beg some honey for Mrs. Strathspey, who could not breakfast without it.

Susan did not like to part with her honey, because her mother loved it, and she therefore gave Betty only a little.

When Barbara saw how little Susan sent, she called her a miser, and she said she must have some more for Mrs. Strathspey. 'I 'll go myself and speak to her. Come with me, Betty,' said the young lady, who seemed to forget she had said, on the day that she was asked to 'take a spoon,' that she never would pay Susan another visit.

'Susan,' she said to the poor girl, whom she had done everything in her power to hurt, 'I must beg a little more honey from you for Mrs. Strathspey's breakfast. You know, at a great time such as this, we should help one another.'

'To be sure we should,' added Betty.

Susan, though she was generous, was not weak; she was willing to give to those she loved, but would not let anything be taken from her or coaxed out of her by those whom she could not respect. She answered that she was sorry she had no more honey to spare.

Barbara grew angry. 'I'll tell you what, Susan Price,' she said, 'the honey I will have, so you may as well give it to me by fair means. Yes or no? Speak! Will you give it me or not? Will you give me that piece of the honey-comb that lies there?'

'That bit of honey-comb is for my mother's breakfast,' said Susan; 'I cannot give it you.'

'Can't you?' said Bab, 'then see if I don't take it.'

She stretched across Susan and grasped, but she did not reach far enough. She made a second dart at the honey-comb and, in her effort to get it, she overset the beehive. The bees swarmed about her. Her maid Betty screamed and ran away. Susan, who was sheltered by a laburnum tree, called to Barbara, upon whom the black clusters of bees were now settling, and begged her to stand still and not

to beat them away. 'If you stand quietly you won't be stung, perhaps.'

But instead of standing quietly, Bab flung about her arms, and stamped and roared, and the bees stung her terribly. Her arms and her face swelled in a frightful manner. She was helped home by poor Susan and Betty. The maid, now that the mischief was done, thought only of how she could excuse herself to her master.

'Indeed, Miss Barbara,' said she, 'it was quite wrong of you to go and get yourself into such a scrape. I shall be turned away for it, you 'll see.'

'I don't care whether you are turned away or not,' said Barbara; 'I never felt such pain in my life. Can't you do something for me? I don't mind the pain either so much as being such a fright. Pray, how am I to be fit to appear at breakfast with Mrs. Strathspey; and I suppose I can't go to the ball either to-morrow, after all.'

'No, that you can't expect to do, indeed,' said Betty. 'You need not think of balls, for those lumps and swellings won't go off your face this week. That 's not what I mind; I 'm

thinking of what your papa will say to me when he sees you, miss.'

Susan, seeing she could be of no further use, was about to leave the house, when at the door she met Mr. Case coming in.

Now, since his second visit to the Abbey, the Attorney had been thinking things over. It was clear that both Sir Arthur and Miss Somers thought highly of the Price family, so perhaps it was a mistake on his part not to be on friendly terms with them too. He felt sure that if the story of Susan's lamb ever reached the Abbey, Sir Arthur would have no more to do with him. It would therefore be well to get into the good graces of the farmer and his family.

So when Mr. Case met Susan at the door he smiled and said, 'How is your mother? Have you called for something that may be of use to her? Barbara, Barbara,—Bab, come downstairs, child, and see what you can do for Susan Price.' But no Barbara answered and her father stalked upstairs to her room. There he stood still, amazed at the sight of his daughter's swollen face.

Before Mr. Case could speak, Betty began to tell the story of Barbara's mishap in her own way. Barbara spoke at the same time, giving quite another account of what had happened.

The Attorney turned the maid away on the spot, and turning to Barbara asked how she dared to treat Susan Price so ill, 'when,' as he said, 'she was kind enough to give you some of her honey. I will not let you treat her so.'

Susan, who could not but hear all that was said, now went to beg the angry father to forgive his daughter.

'You are too good to her, as indeed you are to everybody,' he said. 'I forgive her for your sake.'

Susan curtsied in great surprise, but she could not forget the Attorney's treatment of Daisy, and she left his house as soon as she could to get ready her mother's breakfast.

Mr. Case saw that Simple Susan was not to be taken in by a few sweet words, and when he tried in the same way to approach her father, the blunt, honest farmer looked at him with disdain.

CHAPTER XI

THE PRIZE-GIVING

So matters stood on the day of the long expected prize-giving and ball. Miss Barbara Case, stung by Susan's bees, could not, after all her efforts, go with Mrs. Strathspey to the ball. The ball-room was filled early in the evening. There was a large gathering. The harpers who tried for the prize were placed under the music-gallery at the lower end of the room. Amongst them was our old blind friend, who, as he was not so well clad as the others, seemed to be looked down upon by many of the onlookers. Six ladies and six gentlemen were chosen to be judges of the performance. They were seated opposite to the harpers. The Misses Somers, who were fond of music, were amongst the ladies, and the prize was in the hands of Sir Arthur.

There was now silence. The first harp

sounded, and as each harper tried his skill, those who listened seemed to think that he deserved the prize. The old blind man was the last. He tuned his harp, and such a simple, sad strain was heard as touched every heart. All were delighted, and when the music ceased there was still silence for some moments.

The silence was followed by loud cheers. The judges were all agreed that the old blind harper, who had played last, deserved the prize.

The simple, sad air, which had moved all who listened, was composed by himself. He was asked to give the words belonging to the music, and at last he modestly said he would repeat them, as he could not see to write.

Miss Somers took her pencil, and as the old harper repeated his ballad, she wrote the words. He called it '*Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb.*'

Miss Somers looked at her brother from time to time, as she wrote, and Sir Arthur, as soon as the old man had finished, took him aside and asked him some questions, which brought

to light the whole story of Susan's lamb and of Attorney Case's cruelty.

The Attorney himself was present when the harper began to repeat his ballad. His colour, as Sir Arthur steadily looked at him, changed from red to white, and from white to red, until at length he suddenly shrunk back through the crowd and left the room. We shall not follow him. We had rather follow our old friend, the harper.

No sooner had he received the prize of ten guineas, than he went to a small room belonging to the people of the house, asked for pen, ink and paper, and dictated, in a low voice to his boy, a letter, which he ordered him to put at once into the post-office. The boy ran off with the letter and was but just in time, for the postman's horn was sounding.

The next morning Farmer Price was sitting beside his wife and Susan sorrowing that his week's leave was nearly at an end, and that they had not enough money to give to the man who was willing to go in his place, when a knock was heard at the door. Then the person who delivered the letters in the village

put one into Susan's hand, saying, 'A penny, if you please—here's a letter for your father.'

'For me!' said Farmer Price; 'here's the penny then; but who can it be from, I wonder? Who can think of writing to me, in this world?' He tore open the letter, but the hard name at the bottom of the page puzzled him—'your obliged friend, Llewellyn.'

'And what's this?' he said, opening a paper that was enclosed in the letter. 'It's a song, seemingly; it must be somebody that has a mind to make an April fool of me.'

'But it is not April, it is May, father,' said Susan.

'Well, let us read the letter, and we shall come to the truth all in good time.'

Farmer Price then sat down in his own chair, and read as follows:—

'MY WORTHY FRIEND,—I am sure you will be glad to hear that I have had success this night. I have won the ten-guinea prize, and for that I am much indebted to your sweet daughter Susan; as you will see by a little ballad I enclose for her. Your kindness to me has let me learn something of your family

history. You do not, I hope, forget that I was present when you were counting the treasure in Susan's little purse, and that I heard for what purpose it was all saved. You have not, I know, yet made up the full sum you need; therefore, I will be glad if you will use the five-guinea bank-note which you will find within the ballad. Pay me the money again when it suits you, and if it never suits you to pay it, I shall never ask for it. I shall go my rounds again through this country, I believe, about the same time next year, and will call to see how you are, and to play the new tune for Susan and the dear little boys.

'I should just add, to set your heart at rest about the money, that it does not distress me at all to lend it to you. I am not quite so poor as I appear to be. But it is my wish to go about as I do. I see more of the world under my tattered clothes than, perhaps, I should ever see in a better dress. There are many of us like this, and we are glad, when we can, to do any kindness to such a worthy family as yours.—So, fare ye well.

'Your obliged Friend,

LLEWELLYN.'

Susan now, at her father's bidding, opened

the ballad. He took the five-guinea bank-note, whilst she read, with surprise, 'Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb.' Her mother leaned over her shoulder to read the words, but they were stopped before they had finished the first verse by another knock at the door.

CHAPTER XII

ATTORNEY CASE IN TROUBLE

It was not the postman with another letter. It was Sir Arthur and his sisters.

They came meaning to lend the farmer and his good family the money to pay the man who was willing to go away in the farmer's place. But they found their help was not needed.

'Still, since we are here,' said Sir Arthur, 'there is something I should like to speak about. Mr. Price, will you come out with me, and let me show you a piece of your land through which I want to make a road. Look there,' said Sir Arthur, pointing to the spot, 'I am laying out a drive round my estate, and that bit of land of yours stops me.'

'Why, sir, true enough it 's mine, but you are welcome to it. I can trust you to find me another bit worth the same, or to make up the value of it in some other way. I need say no more.'

Sir Arthur was silent for a few moments. Then he said, 'What is this I hear about some mistake in your lease?'

'Well, sir,' replied the farmer, 'the truth is the fit thing to be spoken at all times. I can show you a letter from your brother who had the estate before you, and who let the farm to me. That letter shows what he meant, Sir Arthur, and if in the writing of the lease it was otherwise said, it is, as you say, a mistake, sir. Now a mistake is a mistake all the world over, and should be treated as such, but Attorney Case says in the matter of a lease you must abide by the mistake as though it were the truth.'

'You seem,' said Sir Arthur, 'to have some quarrel with this Attorney of whom you talk so often. Now would you mind telling me frankly what is the matter between you?'

'The matter between us, sir, is this,' said Price. 'You know the corner of the field with the pink hawthorn near Mr. Case's house? The lane runs past one side of it and a sweet-briar hedge separates it on the other from his garden. Well, sir, the Attorney wishes to

enclose that bit of ground with his own, and as it belongs to the village, and moreover is a play-green for the children, and it has been their custom to meet by the hawthorn every Mayday for as many years as I can remember, I was loth to see them turned out of it.'

'Let us go together and look at this piece of ground,' said Sir Arthur. 'It is not far off, is it?'

'Oh no, sir, close by.'

When they reached the ground, Mr. Case saw them from his garden and hurried to the spot. He was afraid of what the farmer might tell Sir Arthur. But this time the Attorney was too late, for the truth had been already told.

'Is this the place you speak of?' asked Sir Arthur.

'Yes, sir,' answered Price.

'Why, Sir Arthur,' said Attorney Case, seeing that he was too late, 'let there be no dispute about the ground. Let it belong to the village if you will. I give up all claim to it.'

'But you know well, Mr. Case, that a man cannot give up claim to a place which is not

his. You cannot give up this piece of land, for you have no claim to it, as I can prove to you by a look at my maps. This field used to belong to the farm on the other side of the road, but was cut off from it when the lane was made.'

'Indeed you must know best,' said the trembling Attorney, who was afraid of Sir Arthur and enraged to be shown in the wrong before Farmer Price.

'Then,' said Sir Arthur to the farmer, 'you understand that this little green is to be a playground for the village children, and I hope they may gather hawthorn from their favourite bush for many a Mayday to come.'

Farmer Price bowed low, which he seldom did, even when he received a kindness for himself, but he was now overjoyed to think of the children's delight when he should tell them the good news.

'And now, Mr. Case,' said Sir Arthur, turning to the Attorney, 'you sent me a lease to look over.'

'Yes, I thought it my duty to do so. I hope it will not hurt the good farmer.'

'No, it will not hurt him,' said Sir Arthur. 'I am willing to write a new one for him when he pleases. He has a letter from my brother who let the farm to him, which shows exactly what was meant, even if there was a mistake made in making out the lease. I hope I shall never treat any one unfairly.'

'No, indeed,' said the Attorney, 'but I always thought if there was a mistake in a lease it was fair to take advantage of it.'

'Then you shall be judged by your own words,' answered Sir Arthur. 'You meant to send me Farmer Price's lease, but your son has somehow brought me yours instead. I have found a bad mistake in it.'

'A bad mistake in my lease!' gasped the alarmed Attorney.

'Yes,' replied Sir Arthur, pulling the lease out of his pocket. 'Here it is. You will see it has not been signed.'

'But you won't take advantage of a mistake, surely!' said the Attorney, who seemed to forget that he had shortly before said that it was fair to do so.

'I shall not take advantage of you as you

would have done of this honest man,' replied Sir Arthur. 'You shall be paid the value of your house and land upon condition that you leave the parish within one month.'

The Attorney knew it was useless to reply. He therefore turned and sneaked away.

CHAPTER XIII

SUSAN'S BIRTHDAY

'You write a good hand, you can keep accounts, cannot you?' said Sir Arthur to Mr. Price, as they walked towards the cottage. 'I think I saw a bill of your little daughter's drawing out the other day, which was very neatly written. Did you teach her to write?'

'No, sir,' said Price, 'I can't say I did that, for she mostly taught it to herself; but I taught her a few sums, as far as I knew, on winter nights when I had nothing else to do.'

'Your daughter shows that she has been well taught,' said Sir Arthur; 'and her good conduct is a credit to you and her mother.'

'You are very good, very good indeed, sir, to speak in this way,' said the delighted father.

'But I mean to do more than pay you with

words,' said Sir Arthur. 'You are attached to your own family, perhaps you may become attached to me, when you know me, and we shall have many chances of judging one another. I want no one to do my hard work. I only want a steady, honest man, like you, to collect my rents, and I hope, Mr. Price, you will do that for me.'

'I hope, sir,' said Price, with joy and gratitude glowing in his honest face, 'that I'll never give you cause to regret your goodness to me.'

'And what are my sisters about here?' said Sir Arthur, entering the cottage and going behind the two ladies, who were busy measuring a pretty coloured calico.

'It is for Susan, my dear brother. I knew she did not keep that guinea for herself,' said Miss Somers. 'I have just asked her mother to tell me what became of it. Susan gave it to her father; but she must not refuse a gown of our choosing this time; and I am sure she will not, because her mother, I see, likes it. And, Susan, I hear that instead of becoming Queen of the May this year, you

were sitting in your mother's room as she was ill. Your mother has a little colour in her cheeks now.'

'Oh, ma'am,' said Mrs. Price, 'I 'm a different being. Joy, I think, has done it.'

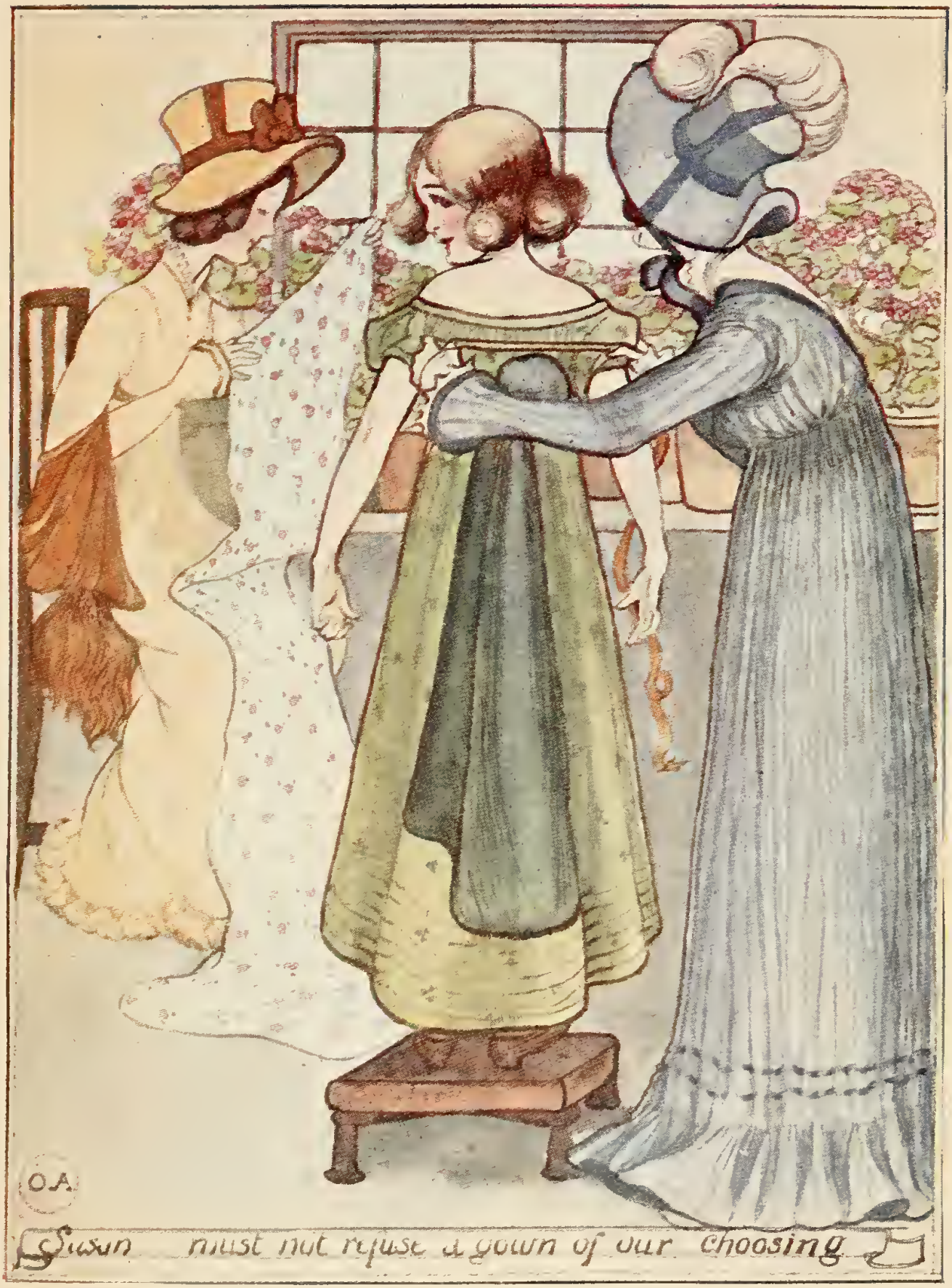
'Then,' said Miss Somers, 'I hope you will be able to come out on your daughter's birth-day which, I hear, is on the twenty-fifth of this month. Make haste and get quite well before that day, for my brother means that all the boys and girls of the village shall have a dance on Susan's birthday.'

'Yes,' said Sir Arthur, 'and I hope on that day, Susan, you will be very happy with your little friends upon their play-green. I shall tell them that it is your good conduct which has won it for them; and if you have anything to ask, any little favour for any of your friends, which we can grant, ask now, Susan.'

'Sir,' said Susan, after glancing at her mother, 'there is, to be sure, a favour I should like to ask; it is for Rose.'

'Well, I don't know who Rose is,' said Sir Arthur, smiling; 'but go on.'

'Ma'am, you have seen her, I believe; she


O.A.
Susan must not refuse a gown of our choosing

is a very good girl indeed,' said Mrs. Price to Miss Somers.

'And works very neatly, ma'am,' continued Susan eagerly, 'and she and her mother heard you were looking out for some one to wait upon you.'

'Say no more,' said Miss Somers; 'your wish is granted. Tell Rose to come to the Abbey to-morrow morning, or rather come with her yourself, for our housekeeper, I know, wants to talk to you about a certain cake. She wishes, Susan, that you should be the maker of the cake for the dance, and she has good things looked out for it already, I know. It must be large enough for everybody to have a slice, and the housekeeper will ice it for you. I only hope your cake will be as good as your bread. Good-bye.'

'How I do wish, now,' said Farmer Price, 'how I do wish, wife, that our good friend, the harper, was only here at this time. It would do his warm old heart good. Well, the best of it is, we shall be able next year, when he comes his rounds, to pay him his money with thanks, being all the time and for ever as

much obliged to him as if we kept it. I long to see him in this house again, drinking, as he did, a glass of Susan's mead, just on this spot.'

'Yes,' said Susan, 'and the next time he comes, I can give him one of my guinea-hen's eggs, and I shall show him Daisy.'

'True, love,' said her mother, 'and he will play that tune and sing that pretty ballad. Where is it? I have not finished it.'

'Rose ran away with it, mother, but I 'll run after her, and bring it back to you this minute,' said Susan.

Susan found her friend Rose at the hawthorn, in the midst of a crowd of children, to whom she was reading 'Susan's Lamentation for her Lamb.'

'The words are something, but the tune—the tune—I must have the tune,' cried Philip. 'I 'll ask my mother to ask Sir Arthur to try and find out which way that good old man went after the ball; and if he 's to be found, we 'll have him back by Susan's birthday, and he shall sit here—just exactly here—by our bush, and he shall play—I mean, if he will—

that same tune for us, and I shall learn it—I mean, if I can—in a minute.'

The good news that Farmer Price was to collect the rents and that Attorney Case was to leave the parish in a month soon spread over the village. Many came out of their houses to have the pleasure of hearing the joyful tidings from Susan herself. The crowd on the play-green grew bigger every minute.

'Yes,' cried Philip, 'I tell you it's quite true, every word of it. Susan's too modest to say it herself, but I tell you all, that Sir Arthur has given us this play-green just because she is so good.'

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